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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF—EDITED BY OMEGA.

ANNE CAVE.

A TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

KENNER DEENE,

AUTHOR OF

"The Dull Stone House," "The Schoolmaster of Alton," &c.

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A N N E C A V E.

CHAPTER I.

LET those who have been tortured by news, true or false, respecting the one being dearest to them, picture to themselves the rage of jealousy, the torment of conjecture, the heartsick disbelief in all things true, or honourable, or unselfish, that rushed in upon Anne's mind and overwhelmed her whole soul.

After listening to Gomazzio's tale, Marie de Villiers was in her thoughts ; she must be the beautiful woman of the opera box, although the doctor had concealed her name. Robert then loved this French heiress. Well, in birth she was more his equal than herself ;

and her heart seemed broken, and, in the words of Scripture, Anne could have exclaimed, “And I, whither shall I go?”

She hid her face on the pillow of Elsie’s bed and sighed one long deep sigh, that seemed to pierce through her like a sword. She did not weep, tears were far from her eyes, they felt burning. “And now the business of my life must be to forget him, to forget Robert!” She could have laughed at the thought in bitterest, deadliest scorn. “Why, he was the life of my life, the being of my being, the soul of my soul! Never, never for one single instant was he absent from my waking thoughts. Always, when alone, would I murmur to myself the words he had spoken, whether to me or to others, in my presence. Every look, every gesture, was treasured in my mind, to be, as it were, perused and re-perused in my moments of freedom.” Oh, that first love of youth is a terrible thing, a great reality, a mad idolatrous

suffering or happiness as the case may be. Anne suffered. Heaven had pity on her that night, and sent her comfort and reassurance, and pure, brief, delicious joy.

The outer bell rang sharply ; Anne raised her head to listen who was coming to disturb her thoughts. Mrs. Aubrey and Sophy were gone to the opera. It was about half-past nine o'clock ; the door opened, and presently she heard a man's firm tread in the passage, and then in the little boudoir, and then in Mrs. Aubrey's chamber, and then the handle of the door turned, and there entered,—Gomazzio again? no,—Robert, with the kind, bright smile she had not seen upon his lip since the days of the past summer at Yanly Manor. He advanced towards Elsie, and Anne signed to him that she slept ; so he sat down on the other side of the bed to the one on which she had been leaning. He offered her his hand, and when her damp, trembling fingers were once clasped in his own, he would

not suffer her to draw them away. So, there were their hands clasped across the pillow of Elsie's bed, and they sat silent for a few moments, with the form of the sleeping child between them, like a pure cherub, hallowing the chamber with her presence. At last he spoke:

"Are you vexed with me? Have you thought me cold and strange?"

"Oh, yes, Robert."

"Yes, but there is a reason," interrupted Robert.

"There is, as you say, a reason."

"Many reasons, my anxieties are terrible. I have heard from my father—he writes me word that his health is failing, that he is sinking gradually into his grave. It is a fearful thing that all his children should desert him in his old age. He says Charles Higham is his greatest friend. Anne, if he should die now," Robert's lip trembled and he turned away his face; "my heart is oppressed be-

sides," he went on, "with another dread which I dare not communicate to you. Not that I disbelieve in your strength of mind, your faith, or your love, but because I hesitate to give my thoughts words."

Again he paused and Anne continued silent. "You have thought me strange and cold," he went on presently. "Anne, I am to you unchanged. I solemnly swear by all that is most sacred, that you are as dear or dearer to me than you ever were, and I long eagerly for the time when I shall call you wife, and clasp you in my arms my own, and mine alone."

"And Marie de Villiers," exclaimed Anne.

Robert turned towards her with a puzzled look, and a queer, uncertain smile on his lip.

"Marie de What's-her-name?"

"De Villiers. Now, Robert, don't pretend. That beautiful girl, whom you escorted to

the Hotel de Cluny. That French heiress, whose family you said was so good on both sides."

"Well, what of her?"

"Is she not lovely? Is she not rich? Is she not above all of high birth? Robert, do you not love that lady?"

"No; she is an affected, pretentious, forward creature, whom if I troubled myself about, I should soon dislike and despise, instead of loving. As it is, she never crosses my mind, unless you mention her name—pray do so no more. It is absurd to be jealous because I escorted her over the Hotel de Cluny. I hope you are not jealous, Anne, I don't like jealousy in anybody, it makes people fretful, suspicious, and unhappy. 'Trifles, light as air, are to the jealous, confirmation strong as proofs of Holy Writ.'"

Instantly all Gomazzio's tale appeared to Anne in a new and absurd light. She saw the Italian prejudiced, prying, mistaken, probably

trumping up an outrageous tale from some such slight occurrence as Robert's having casually looked at a fair-haired lady at the opera. She wondered at her own folly in having given credence to such a tale. With the impetuosity of her nature, words rose to her lips.

"Robert, I trust you with my whole heart. I love you; I worship you; I would die for you."

He covered the hand he held with his disengaged one, he bent his head over it.

"It is sweet," he murmured, "to be thus loved, through evil report and good report—thank God for this one sweet drop in a cup of untold sorrows!"

"Why untold, Robert? Let me share them—wild surmises have already crossed my mind. I all but guess your dreadful secret."

He turned to Anne a face on which was stamped for the time the pallor of death.

“ You guess ?” he whispered, “ what ?”

“ You are not the lawful heir to the Yanly property. You are not Mr. Harvey Aubrey’s son.”

Again the colour flooded the cheek, and a bright gleaming in the eye told Anne she had guessed wrongly.

“ I am his lawful son and lawful heir, so help me Heaven !”

“ Then there can be nothing to dread—you have done no wrong, no crime.”

“ Do you think me like a Lara, like a Cæsar,” he asked with a smile of mockery, “ I often think I have all the ingredients for the manufacture of some such equivocal gentleman.

“ ‘ Mark how that lone and blighted bosom sears
The scathing thought of execrated years.
Behold—but who hath seen or who shall see
Man as himself, the secret spirit free.
Feared, shunned, belied, ere youth had lost its force,
He hated man too much to feel remorse,
Lone, wild and strange, he stood alike exempt
From all affection and from all contempt.’ ”

"Is not that my case?"

Here Elsie opened her eyes, and perceiving Robert, sprang up to embrace him.

"Are you repeating poetry, Robert?"

"Yes, dear one, but not such poetry as you would understand. I wrote some ugly rhymes the other day which you may read if you like," and he drew from his pocket a long paper, on which was scrawled some rhymes, in a careless, blotted hand-writing. "Nobody could possibly read this but myself," said Robert, so he read aloud the following lines, entitled

THE KNIGHT OF THE WOLD.

A castle grim, with a gloomy keep,
And a drawbridge over its black moat deep
Stood frowning over the Wold.

No garden fair, no wild wood green,
Nor blushing flowers, nor vines were seen,
To blossom on the Wold.

Bleak, dark, and bare its stretched away
For miles on miles its surface grey,
The barren, trackless Wold.

Within the frowning castle dwelt
Sir Robert, Lord of Indenfelt,
And he was Knight of the Wold.

Fierce tales of wrong, and midnight guilt,
Of plunder, and of life blood spilt
Were breathed of the Knight of the Wold.

Sir Robert was tall and strong of limb,
These tales were mocked and scorned of him,
The scornful Knight of the Wold.

His coal black hair, curled close and thick
He wore much hair on his upper lip,
This grim dark Knight of the Wold.

His serving men were fierce and few,
And to their master firmly true,
The fearful Knight of the Wold.

Once on a brilliant summer day,
Sir Robert rode into a city gay,
Sir Robert, the Knight of the Wold.

He rode a charger, black as night,
And in black armour, all bedight,
Appeared the Knight of the Wold.

The Burghers stared, the children cried,
And to their mothers swiftly hied ;
They feared the Knight of the Wold.

Sir Robert rode on, with laugh of scorn :
“ Good people, on this Sabbath morn,
Why fear the Knight of the Wold ? ”

He rode to where while church bells rung,
The holy Monks a requiem sung,
The mail clad Knight of the Wold.

He left his charger at the door,
He joined the crowd of rich and poor,
The strong, dark Knight of the Wold.

The cowled Monks, with solemn tread,
Paced up the nave ; with lowered head
Came the warlike Knight of the Wold.

Their voices rose with cadence sweet,
The music made all hearts to beat ;
Down kneit the Knight of the Wold.

“ Oh, breathe one other prayer,” he said,
“ Not only for the silent dead,
But for me, the Knight of the Wold.”

The fathers gazed with mild surprise,
On the fearless front and flashing eyes,
Of the kneeling Knight of the Wold.

“ Good father, since my youth began,
Up to this time that I am man,
I, Robert, Knight of the Wold,

“ Have haunted by a demon been,
A frightful fiend, by no one seen,
Save me, the Knight of the Wold.

“If once alone this demon stands
Before me, and its hellish hands
It lays on the Knight of the Wold.

“It comes with gibe, it comes with threat,
With menace of a fearful fret,
For me, the Knight of the Wold.

“It tells me that, one dreadful day,
Its power to blast, if not to slay,
Me, me, the Knight of the Wold,

“Will surely be adjudged by Heaven,
And I to death, for refuge driven,
Must flee, poor Knight of the Wold.

“Good Fathers, let a mass be said,
Not only for the unconscious dead,
But for me, the Knight of the Wold.”

The mass was said, the people stayed
To watch that black knight as he prayed—
That hapless Knight of the Wold.

The bells have rung, the mass is o'er,
Now strides Sir Robert towards the door ;
He is off away to the Wold.

He has seen a face that crowd among,
A face most lovely, fair and young,
Then he rides away to the Wold.

He thinks by night, he dreams by day
Of Lady Alice, fair and gay—
That fierce dark Knight of the Wold.

One autumn morn, of mist and gloom,
Forth rode Sir Robert o'er the broom—
The broom that dots the Wold.

He rode with furious angry speed,
And little cared he, or took heed—
That reckless Knight of the Wold.

At last he gave his horse the rein,
And wandered o'er the trackless plain—
The wild, dark, gloomy Wold.

Till by fatigue and chagrin spent,
At last he stayed, and down he lent
Upon the dark, damp Wold.

His horse stood patient by his side,
And soon to dream-land did he glide :
Sir Robert of the Wold.

He slept till rose the Autumn moon,
Full bright and glorious, as tho' June
Were smiling o'er the Wold.

Strange voices roused the slumbering Knight,
And by the full moon's silver light,
He gazed across the Wold.

He saw a knight in armour stand,
Holding a lady by the hand,
Upon the Midnight Wold.

“Nay, fairest Alice,” sigh'd the knight,
“I swear by yonder orb of light,
That glistens o'er the Wold,

“ That I, to have thee for my bride,
For ten long months have vainly sighed :”
And he knelt down on the Wold.

“ When forth with hawk and hound to-day,
Thy father’s friends in bright array,
Rode forth across the Wold.

“ I followed like thy vassal, I,
The wealthy Lord of Liedenbigh ;
I followed o’er the Wold.

“ I led thy palfrey by a sign
Which I had learned in Palestine ;
It wandered o’er the Wold.

“ Thy gentle palfrey gone astray,
Then, Lady, thou had’st lost thy way
Upon the trackless Wold.

“ I followed close, I followed near,
Thou had’st not any cause for fear
Though lost upon the Wold.

“ Oh pardon, love, a lover’s ruse,
And take my passion for excuse ;
I kneel upon the Wold.

“ Thy father stern, and rich and proud,
Has singled me from out the crowd ;
Oh, answer on the Wold.

“ Say, wilt thou be my gentle bride,
My joy, my blessing, and my pride ?
Oh, promise on the Wold !”

The Knight was young, the Knight was fair,
Bright, soft, and flaxen shone his hair
Upon the moonlight Wold.

“I will to do a valorous deed,
With all a fearless soldier’s speed,
Upon this wild, dark Wold.

“Thou knowest the Lord of Indenfelt,
Whose fathers long have tyrants dwelt
Upon this fearful Wold.

“That stern wild man of blood and wrong
Whose Sires’ dark deeds are told in song—
This Robert of the Wold.

“Him have I sworn to meet in fight,
And to break down his impious might—
This tyrant of the Wold.”

With curling lip, and flashing eye,
With clenched hand, and deep drawn sigh,
Up sprang the Knight of the Wold.

“Draw, Heinrich, Lord of Leidenbigh,
Eat your own words, breathe your last sigh
Upon my barren Wold.”

Their swords were crossed with furious might,
Deadly and deadlier waxed the fight
Upon the midnight Wold.

Till pierced to death Sir Heinrich lay,
His life blood ebbing fast away
Upon the sad, damp Wold.

Sir Robert, with a grim, dark smile,
Looked at the wounded Knight the while
Upon the grey, dark Wold.

And when his eyes were closed in death,
And he had sighed his latest breath
Upon the bloody Wold.

Then, Robert turned to Alice fair,
Who, shivering in the midnight air,
Lay trembling on the Wold.

“ Oh, lady, now your Knight is slain,
Up, mount your horse, and forth again
Across the midnight Wold.

“ A lady’s love is light as air,
Go back to yonder city fair,
Across the barren Wold.

“ To-morrow’s sun shall shine again,
As tho’ brave Heinrich were not slain,
Upon the trackless Wold—

“ To-morrow other lover’s sighs
Shall prove the power of your sweet eyes ;
Go, leave this wretched Wold.

“ And I’ll thy gentle Palfrey guide
Across this plain so dark and wild,
This fearful midnight Wold.”

“ Nay !” cried fair Alice. “ I, this night,
Do not return, by this pale light,
Across the trackless Wold.

"No lover in your city gay,
Can ever steal my heart away,
From Robert of the Wold."

"Thee have I loved, with passion grave,
Since in St. Austin's holy nave
First knelt the Knight of Wold."

"Oh, lady, this were bliss too great
Heaven scarce could change the bitter fate
Of Robert of the Wold."

"The guilt of blood is on my hand,
And not a maid throughout the land,
But fears the Knight of Wold."

"'Twas in fair fight," sweet Alice said,
"Heinrich was numbered with the dead,
And stretched upon the Wold."

"But, lady, there's a demom, grim,
Which, for his buried father's sin,
Torments the Knight of the Wold."

"I fear no demon," Alice cried,
"Oh, take me, take me for your bride,
My Robert of the Wold."

He clasps the lady to his breast,
He mounts his steed, he takes no rest,
But flies across the Wold.

The Lady Alice is his bride.
None ever knew how Heinrich died
Upon the midnight Wold.

"What do you think of that?" said Robert, when he had finished.

"I think it queer," said Elsie.

"And you, Anne?"

Of course in her blind love, all he did seemed right in her eye.

"I like the rhymes, but what does it mean?" she asked.

"It means that this dark man stained with blood, haunted by a demon, was still beloved through all. Could you thus love?"

"No!" she frankly answered; "because on such a dark and fiendish character my love would never have fallen. In the first place, what I love I know and feel to be great, and good, and gentle."

He smiled brightly, and then said in a low tone—

"But the fiend, who for his buried father's sin tormented the Knight of the Wold. What if such a fiend held sway for some such

poetical reason over your Lover, would you stand to him?"

"Aye, though a whole legion of fiends surrounded him."

He smiled again as he whispered—

"You will be true?"

She again replied in the passionate words she had used at Yanly—

"Through life, and to the death."

Just then the bell rang, and in less than a minute George Aubrey stood in their presence. It was the first time Anne had ever seen the brothers together. They shook hands; they had not met before that day.

"Well Robert lad, any news?"

"No," said Robert.

"I hope Miss Cave is well. And Elsie monkey, you must not drink too much again. I must read you a lecture on the vice of intoxication."

"What?" asked Robert, with a puzzled air.

"Why don't you know that this small individual's illness was caused by imbibing potent liquor, in other words getting tipsy, on brandy and water."

"Absurd," said Robert, turning to Anne.
"What does my brother mean, Miss Cave?"

She related the facts as they occurred, and neither blamed George nor Elsie. Robert looked grave, and when she ceased speaking, he said—

"She must have had tendency to fever before. It was very wrong though to give a child of that age brandy."

Anne quite expected George would have made some angry or sarcastic reply to this remark of Robert's; instead of that he sat down at the foot of Elsie's bed and said, good-humouredly—

"Come and have a good morning at the billiard-rooms in the Palais Royal to-morrow, Bob, at five pounds a side—will you?"

Robert answered—

“Yes, with all my heart.”

Now the next day would be Sunday, and though Anne had been long enough in Paris to cease from feeling surprised at the utter disregard in which that day is held on the Continent; still she felt sorry that Robert should become so completely foreign in his habits and ideas.

“To-morrow will be Sunday,” she said, looking up at the handsome brothers.

“Eh, qui est que cela fait,” asked Robert with a smile—“You know at Rome we do as Rome does.”

“When Rome does wrong?” said Anne softly.

He laughed—

“Well, perhaps it isn’t right, but somehow I seem to leave all my Sunday orthodox ideas behind at Yanly, don’t you George?”

“Oh, hang it!” cried George, “I never do have any Sunday orthodox ideas at Yanly, or anywhere else. It’s awful work for me to

go into that nut-shell of a church and listen to the spouting of that dreadfully good young man Curate Higham—the mere thought of that fellow always gives me a headache, and an inclination to rush out of the church for air. He quite oppresses me does Higham."

"George have you a cigar with you?" said Robert.

George took out a splendidly worked case, and handed his brother a cigar.

"Thank you. Now I shall just stroll up the Boulevard and smoke this out—you will come, George?"

George sprang up. The brothers shook hands with Miss Cave, they both kissed Elsie, and then went out. Anne believed these two Aubreys loved not each other, and their leaving thus affectionately together pained her much, she scarce knew why. She felt, truth to say, a stern conviction that George was her enemy, and would poison Robert's mind against her. Could she have known

all—could she have seen that when Robert went out of the door of Elsie's chamber, happiness went out from her presence for many a weary, weary month, she would not have slept so soundly and so calmly as she did after witnessing the brief interview of the brothers.

CHAPTER II.

JANE.

THE next day Anne did not see Robert once, nor the next day, nor the next. On Wednesday, Elsie came into her mother's little boudoir; a bright fire burned there, and Anne sat by her side, knitting. Her thoughts were troubled and anxious, but still she had faith, unbounded faith, in Robert. Gomazzio's hints and inuendoes she did not suffer to annoy her. Mrs. Aubrey had become again as distantly cold as ever. She conferred long with Gomazzio, only in Miss Cave's presence in his own language, which she spoke fluently.

On this morning the lady held a close, animated conference with the sinister Italian. Anne glanced furtively at her face; it was white, even to the lips; the eyes flared with a terrible fire, and on the centre of each cheek burnt a blood-red tiny spot, which contrasted fearfully with the surrounding pallor; her voice flowed on sweetly in the melodious accents of the most musical of tongues, but what was the import of the softly spoken words?

Anne soon became convinced that it was no ordinary theme that occupied the lady and the doctor. She spoke fast, and anon paused for breath, and then spoke some words in a slow, laboured manner. As for the Italian, his face was horrible to look at; the brows were contracted, the eyes gleamed furtively, the mouth looked devilish in its ironical sneering. He, too, looked pale and excited; he clenched his hands and spoke his words out in a sonorous and defiant manner.

Anne listened for one name to pass their lips ; she listened, as listens the wild beast of the jungle, crouching for his prey in the noon-tide heat. She listened fiercely, eagerly, desperately ; but they were guarded, the name of Robert was not uttered. At last one name sounded once and again, and yet again ; it was a name short and simple as her own—a name she had learned to hate, to tremble at, she knew not why, a woman's name—Jane. Oh, the agony of that moment—the falling away of faith and hope and happiness—the crushing conviction that Gomazzio's tale of the opera was true. The instant dumb despair of thought, if we may so express it, caused Anne to give up all as lost, and sit down overwhelmed with a great discovery. She was duly prepared for all that followed. She looked out for it, and accepted the events which came after this morning as though they were boons instead of agonies, with a “ still serene and stoic air.” She did not

awake to the full consciousness of her misery until weeks after.

That evening Gomazzio came to her after Elsie's dinner; she had tasted nothing; and he asked her suavely to accompany him to the opera. He said he had Mrs. Aubrey's leave. Anne knew what he was going to shew her. She wished to go, and dressed hastily in a robe of pink cashmere, and with her brown hair arranged in plaits and bands, then she stood before the glass in her little chamber, and contemplated her own sad, young face. It was not pale; a brilliant colour mantled on each cheek, and the mournful dark eyes flashed brightly. She went down stairs.

"*Mais vous êtes charmante, belle angelique,*" said Gomazzio.

A voiture was in waiting in the street, she entered followed by the doctor. He behaved well and kindly; he knew much and guessed more, but he did not torment or annoy her.

They reached the opera. Its splendour seemed to mock Anne in her anguish. Gomazzio led her to a nicely fitted box.

“This box,” said he, “belongs to the beautiful woman, at whom the young man of the Rue Richlieu gazes so earnestly. She will enter soon, and you will be able to see who is preferred before you. Nay, I mean not to wound you. If an Englishman trifles thus with a pure young heart—” But the Orchestra struck up, and the remainder of the Italian’s speech was lost.

The music soothed Anne, as music will; it seemed, at one part, to mourn with her, like a sweet friend and sympathiser.

At last, he came—Robert. She saw him enter a box very close to hers. The first thing he did was to look into her box; he flushed over cheek and brow when he recognised her, and made his way at once towards the box. He held out his hand to her, hers lay in it, cold, nerveless, like a thing of

naught. Anne turned her eyes away from him—not in anger, God knows, only in hopeless despair.

“Anne, this is a surprise.”

“Yes. I did not expect to come here.”

Gomazzio lent over towards Robert.

“Monsieur Aubrey, we would offer you a place, but, except these two seats, this box belongs to the Countess of Maine.”

Robert bowed slightly, and grew a little pale.

“Do you know that lady?” continued Gomazzio.

“I did once,” said Robert.

“When she was une demoiselle?”

“Yes.”

“She is now a widow!”

“I know it,” said Robert, gloomily.

“I am the medical attendant of her little daughter. Would you like to renew the acquaintance of this friend of your early youth? If so, speak, and I will present you.”

Robert's face grew fearful in the intensity of expression that passed over it; he clenched his teeth, and his brow became dark, a hue, like lead, spread over his complexion, and his eyes shot forth gleams of lurid light. It scarcely was the face of Robert Aubrey, on which Anne gazed; but he did not speak, and the Italian repeated his offer to introduce him to the widowed Countess of Maine. At last, Robert said, with evident effort, and with laboured breathing :

“ She would not speak to him.”

“ Au contraire !” cried Gomazzio. “ She has seen you, she has told me that some foolish misunderstanding between you, caused by a total mistake, had estranged you from each other ; she wishes to be reconciled. She is a beautiful woman, and a widow of six months' standing ! Do not rest upon ceremony ; away with your detestable English mauvaise honte. But here she is, here is the divine Jean la Comtesse. Monsieur Aubrey,

à vous présente à Madame La Comtesse de Maine."

And Jane, the love of his youth, stood in the presence of Robert. They bowed to each other; he, low, deep, with humility, with flushing cheek and averted eye; she, with a graceful, stately, calm inclination of the head, and with a sweet, winning smile upon the rosy lips. Oh, she was beautiful! Anne's heart owned that, when she saw her, at once —tall and queenlike, with auburn hair, plentiful and glossy, wreathed gracefully round her head, a brow like marble, a cheek with a brightness in its tint like the bloom on a peach. That exquisite, firm, pink cheek was turned toward Anne, and she saw it did not owe its bloom to art. The Countess wore a dress of delicate mauve silk, trimmed with black crape—she was still in mourning for her husband, and this was her opera costume —she wore no ornament, except a massive gold brooch, inlaid with black mosaic, her

snow white neck and arms were left bare ; in figure, she was inclined to embonpoint ; her age, at this time, was twenty seven. This was the outside of Jane, the all powerful, the arbiter of Robert's peace, the preferred before Anne, the rival of her life. She searched, in vain, for some trace of the inward feelings, when she consulted that calm, passionless countenance, that polished brow, that eye that "sparkled where the ice appears," as Byron has it. The cheek was as rosy, the mouth as serene, when she was presented to Robert, as though she had only parted from him the night before, and on ordinary terms. He, meanwhile, was swayed down by a tempest of passion ; he quailed beneath her glance, he trembled on her voice ; in a word—he loved her again as of yore. Anne saw it all—she saw it and smiled like the Spartan boy, while her heart strings were being rent asunder. Of course, she heard and saw nothing of the opera ; she only heard

and saw them—those two beings, who held her life in their hands, and who were crushing all the happiness out of it before her eyes. What did Robert think of her that night? She verily believed he never saw her from the moment the Countess entered the box. Once her eye glanced towards Anne, and she heard her say, “Who is that young person?” but his reply was inaudible.

After the performance was over, she only bowed to him in passing. He did not see her, he did not offer her his hand. Oh, the unutterable anguish of that moment. Gomazzio placed her in the voiture, the chillness, as of death, was upon her, and she trembled in every limb. The Doctor wrapped his cloak around her, and as the vehicle began to toil through the then ill-lighted and interminable Rue St. Honoré, he said:

“That is a match on which I have set my heart. The young Aubrey is cut out for the

beautiful Countess. What does Mademoiselle think?"

"An excellent match, a most sweet marriage," said Anne, hysterically.

"Ah, Mademoiselle, you will one day thank me for shewing you that you held to a false hope."

"What does Monsieur mean?"

"Pauvre petite," said he, compassionately. "I believe you to be innocent as the little flower of the spring, which lifts up its perfumed head by the wayside."

Anne was too wretched to argue with the Italian, or to quarrel with his words. He raised one of her listless, damp hands in his, and continued :

"This little hand is cold, the heart which belongs to its owner is sad and despairing. Have I guessed right?"

"Monsieur, do not torture me," she cried, passionately, tearing away her hand from

him. “ By what right you mix yourself up in my affairs, and dictate to me thus, I have yet to learn. What can my heart, or feelings, or my sufferings possibly matter to you ? Leave me in peace.”

“ So be it,” said Gomazzio, quietly, “ so be it, Mademoiselle la tigresse. One thing I will say, and all your English pride shall not prevent me saying it. Should the time ever come when you have want of anything—be it money, be it help, be it protection, whenever you need a friend, apply to Gustave Gomazzio. You shall not apply in vain ; my soul is honourable, if my face is ugly and my manner rude.”

“ You are a great friend of Mrs. Aubrey, Monsieur.”

“ Does that displease you ?”

“ Monsieur, there is a plot against Robert Aubrey. Observation tells me that you have joined in it.”

“ Observation has not deceived you.”

“ And Monsieur calls himself honourable.”

“ Mademoiselle, it is my nature to plot and
intrigue. I am an Italian.”

“ Monsieur, good night; we are here, at
the Rue Taitbout.”

CHAPTER III.

THE PLOT UPSET.

A week rolled away in the ordinary nature of duties. Elsie was nearly recovered, and Mrs. Aubrey told Miss Cave it was her wish that the child should resume her scholastic labours, both with herself and Monsieur Naton. Had she been less preoccupied she might have ventured to say something to Mrs. Aubrey in favour of the pale, excitable child, who still complained of headache, having another week's holiday granted to her; but Mrs. Aubrey wanted to make an accomplished,

well-bred young lady out of the countrified English child, and she was obeyed. The heart-sick governess and the invalid child went daily into the chill saloon for three hours, and pored over geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar. Anne's mind wandered from her employ—she was but a lax instructress to a languid pupil.

One day, Elsie complained so much of headache after the French lesson of Monsieur Naton, that Miss Cave took upon herself to put her to bed; and she soon slept soundly. Anne breakfasted as usual with Mrs. Aubrey, who soon after went out with Sophy.

It was a delightful spring day, Anne felt a longing to breathe the air, and as she had no one to escort her, she resolved to set French decorum at defiance, and walk out alone. If Mrs. Aubrey reproved, she could but submit—she would rather incur her displeasure than deprive herself of the air that mild March day. She went to Annette and consigned Elsie to

her care, and then put on her bonnet, and sallied forth into the sunny, brilliant Boulevard. Nobody accosted her. She felt rather shy; notwithstanding, she crossed the Rue de la Paix, the Place Vendome, and on towards the gardens of the Tuilleries, now robed in their earliest dress of green. When once among the trees of the broad walk, where the mildness of the sweet breath of spring seemed to re-vivify her drooping spirit, she slackened her pace, and soon turned into the more thickly planted and unfrequented part of the grounds; but even here she encountered children with their bonnes, and, occasionally, couples, who might be married, or lovers, or what not. At last she sat down on a low seat, and presently saw, through the interlacing branches, two fair, stately, noble looking Islanders, walking slowly side by side—Robert and the Countess of Maine.

They sat down nearly opposite to her, but

the trees grew thickly between them, and their lower branches were already loaded with young leaves, so she was unobserved by them, while every look and gesture of theirs was dwelt upon by Anne ; and the soft breeze even wafted their words to her ears. She peered at them through the branches, and even knelt upon the ground, so as to conceal herself more effectually from observation, and feasted her eyes on her own misery. Oh, the calm, fair, handsome face of Robert's love, her exquisite dress of rich, figured, black silk, with rosettes of black crape, a bonnet of mauve crape, and a mantle of Genoa velvet of the same colour ! Still smiling, rosy, and serene was the aristocratic face, and the small, superb head was held as haughtily as ever. Anne did not trust herself to gaze at Robert ; it was enough for her to drink in every look and gesture of the Countess. Robert had in his hand a book with a blue cover, a small

volume of Byron's Poems, which he had often read and quoted from to Anne in bygone days.

"Let me read your ladyship a favourite of mine," said Robert. He opened the book.

"To him there was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him ;
He had looked upon it till it could not pass away,
He had no breath, no being but in hers—
She was his voice—he did not speak to her,
But trembled on her words.
She was his sight, for his eyes followed hers,
And saw with hers, which coloured all his objects.
He had ceased to live within himself ;
She was his life, the ocean to the river of his thoughts ;
Upon a tone, a touch of hers, his blood would ebb and flow,
And his cheek change tempestuously,
His heart—"

Robert paused ; his voice faltered, his book fell from his hand. The next instant he was at the lady's feet. Anne heard wild words of

burning, maddening, idolatrous passion ; she heard the voice of the charmer say, blandly : “ Robert, I am yours !—” Then she could hear no more, and she rushed from the spot. The estranged pair were reaffianced.

Instead of turning in the direction of home, she wandered on to the Place de la Concorde, and, having crossed that magnificent square, she entered the Champs Elysées. It was filled with carriages and gay pedestrians. Anne walked on, fast and furious, taking note of nothing—her brain was in a whirl, her heart torn and bleeding, despair in her soul, and, most probably, in her eye likewise. At last the thought struck her that she ought to retrace her steps. She turned and walked again in the direction of the Tuilleries.

“ Have you lost your way ?” said a voice at her elbow.

Anne turned, and saw a middle-aged lady, with nice kind eyes, and a face that had been pretty in youth, albeit threads of silver were

mixed, thickly, with the light brown hair.—The dress of this individual was a dark green damask, a grey shawl, and a close, black velvet bonnet. She was neat, and plain, and ladylike, *bien chassée et gâtée*, and with a business-like and thoroughly British mode of address.

“Have you lost your way?” said this person. “Because I saw you walk hurriedly, and turn as if you were frightened. I am English myself, and I always feel sorry for young English girls who have lost their way.”

“Madame, I thank you,” said Anne, stiffly. “I have not lost my way—I know it perfectly.”

“Then I ought to apologise,” said the lady, “for addressing you so abruptly.”

“Not at all, Madame;” and, with a bow, Anne hurried on.

She was considerably annoyed at the remark and interference of the middle-aged,

English lady, and went home more slowly and sedately, without exciting further remark. She reached the Rue Taitbout, and the first thing she did was to hasten to Elsie's chamber. She still slept, and appeared so worn and feverish in her sleep that Anne felt pained anew as she looked at her. She took off her bonnet, and sat by Elsie's bed, dumb with the weight of a great sorrow.

"To die, to sleep, and by a sleep to say we end the heart-ache
And the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to.
'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished."

The spirit of these lines may have swelled at Anne's breast during the hours that she sat silent and stirless by the side of the sleeping child. She knew not even how long she sat there. She knew that she did not call womanly dignity or worldly wisdom to her aid in that time of darkness—still less did she appeal to a higher power for assistance. Oh,

no ! she was selfish in her grief as ever, undisciplined, rebellious, wretched, with one wild wish stirring at her heart,—that she might see Robert, tax him with his perfidy, and then quit his presence for ever. Her mind was made up ; she would leave the Aubreys at once, cost her what it might. Presently voices, angry voices, roused her slightly, from her lethargy of grief ; she listened with apathy, as the dying may be supposed to listen to the turmoils and stirrings of the world around them.

“Lost, lost, lost,” Anne heard Mrs. Aubrey say, in a voice, agonized with frenzied rage. “That wretch, Gomazzio, has watched this woman at the opera, and Robert’s fixed attention towards her. He told me her name, and that he was her medical attendant ; also, that she was left a widow, with three thousand a year. He represented to me that, with her position, fortune, title, and beauty, her ambition would not rest satisfied with less than an

English lord or a foreign prince for a husband, and that Robert, with his uncertain prospects, would be refused with annihilating disdain, should he renew his addresses. Well, he re-introduced this pair of separated lovers, and Jane, I suppose, become more sentimental as she has grown a little older, or else thoroughly disbelieving the tale I told her, and resolved to be contented with the heir of Yanly Manor, has accepted Robert,—they will marry, she will present him with a son, and then, come what will, you have lost Yanly Manor."

"Who told you this?"

"Who? Gomazzio, to whom the yellow-haired Jane has just confided her intentions not half-an-hour since. I am certain I saw a gleam of intense satisfaction in his eye when he told me this news, although he pretended to compassionate my distress."

"Mother, why have you trusted this Italian?"

"Because, George, he is the most clever man in Paris. If anybody could have made you heir of Yanly it is he. I have come to France for the purpose of consulting him. I have kept up correspondence with those who have spoken enthusiastically of his power; he has always professed to me that the one great object of his life was money. I have offered him ten thousand pounds to effect what we desire, and he has promised to do his best. See how he acts; oh, George, my son—my son, we are lost!"

"I was right. I knew no woman breathing, save Jane Danvers, had power to take Yanly from us—"

"And she will do it."

There was a pause; at last George said—
"Mother, I am terribly in debt. What must I do?"

"You must marry this little French heiress to whom I have introduced you. She has ten thousand pounds."

"Perhaps she won't have me. I imagine she admires Bob."

"Whisper to her what is in store for him, and she will turn with pleasure to you. Do you admire her?"

"Yes, she is pretty enough, but, oh! to be tied to a wife—the very thing I hate. Oh, mother, I could transpose Iago's wish, and exclaim—

"Great Heaven! the souls of me and all my tribe defend from poverty!"

Here the outer bell rang, and Mrs. Aubrey and her son hastened out into the salon to receive some visitors whom they expected to dinner, and Miss Cave managed to make her escape unobserved.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RUE MONT MARTRE.

THE next evening Anne sat knitting by the stove in the salle à manger. Everybody was out save Elsie, who was in bed, when suddenly, without any warning, Robert Aubrey stood before her. A strange, unlooked-for nerve and self-possession came to her aid. Was it the consciousness that she at least had right on her side? She thought so—any how it was he who looked pale and nervous. After placing a chair for him, Anne sat down—not to her work, that would have

been a mockery—but sat down very calm and very still.

“Anne, I am going to debase myself in your eyes. I have no excuse. I am a villain and a coward.”

“Stop!” said Anne, loudly. “I know all, Robert; you who are wandering at will in a garden of delight, who, however you may have chafed and repined at your imaginary sentimental sorrows, are yet one of those favoured ones who are clothed in purple and fine linen, and who fare sumptuously every day. You, the heir to a large fortune—beautiful, brave, young, high-born. You, who ride through life in cushioned chariots, and who lie at night on beds of eider-down. You, of the aristocracy, the race born to put their feet on the necks of the herd. You, I repeat, met with a poor and toiling daughter of the people—you paused on your road to speak sweet, false words to this humble way-farer. Cheer up, ‘sad one, you said; there is a day

approaching when I shall come into my kingdom, and then will I love you and cherish you as the apple of mine eye. You shall leave the dusty, toilsome road-side of life, and enter with me into the bright world of pleasure and affluence. You shall no more soil your foot or your hand; you shall ride with me in my chariot; and through life I will protect you. I will lift up your head, and you shall be exalted. Robert, none of these things would have tempted that humble wayfarer, but that she loved—oh! she loved you, and she was lonely and uncomforted until you spoke to her—you showed her bright glimpses of a joy she had never dared to dream of. You told her of a fair false woman, who had deceived you and made you suffer terrible things, and your words were these, ‘If she knelt at my feet for forgiveness, I would spurn her with my foot. If she were dying on those stones, I could find it in my heart to smite her on the

mouth.' Harsh words, savage words, Robert Aubrey, but you had suffered horribly and I excused your violence. Robert, that woman has come again, not dying on the stones, not kneeling at your feet, but only smiling, gaily dressed and wealthy. Robert, it is you who have knelt at her feet, not she at yours, and now you will marry her. She is well and nobly born, and you will marry her—but first you must go back to that lowly-born, toiling wayfarer—'back, back,' you must say to her, 'into your own sphere, I was under a mistake when I spoke those words to you, forget them.' In your class you must have become so accustomed to disappointments that this will be nothing new. If indeed your poor heart is wounded I am sorry, but what can I do? You must bear your grief as well as you can. I must marry my high-born love, and never more think of you—farewell, wayfarer, farewell. Henceforth I am heir to Yanly Manor, and the husband of the Countess

of Maine. You are a teacher at twenty-five pounds a year; you must go your way; I will go mine. Let us part.' Well, Robert, I am going. I shall not remain in the Rue Taitbout after to-morrow."

Anne paused—she had spoken slowly—she was pale, but shed no tears. Robert bent his face into his hands; he wept aloud. A convulsive sob rent his bosom, and he cried out, "God forgive me for what I have made you suffer. I do not ask you to do so, you never can; but oh, much as you may loathe, despise, and spurn me—bitterly as you have spoken, and scornfully as you treat me, Anne—Anne, if you could see into my heart, you would pity me, indeed you would."

"Robert, Robert, go away. You are affianced to another, and shall not linger here, but first listen to this. If you have forgotten your promises I have not forgotten mine. You have twice asked me to be faithful, and I have twice promised to be so through life

and to the death. Should the time ever come when you want a friend, whose very life and blood would be cheerfully sacrificed to you—remember Anne Cave."

"Generous—noble," he murmured, and would have taken her hand, but Anne waved him off.

"Go, go," she said, turning from him. "In your prosperity I will none of you, but in your adversity come to me."

He went out. She then rushed upstairs to her room, bolted the door, and flung herself passionately on the ground.



"But this is a very sudden indisposition, Miss Cave, is it not?"

Anne lowered her eyes. "No, Mrs. Aubrey, the resolve is sudden; the indisposition I have felt for some time."

" And you really want rest and recreation. Do you purpose going to England ?"

" Oh, no ; my relations have sailed for America. I have now no ties in England. I shall remain in France until I have obtained perfect mastery of the language."

" I am glad you have an eye to your ulterior good. Notwithstanding your reticence I can make a tolerably shrewd guess at the cause of your disquietude. You have been ill-used. Was not my estimate of a certain person's character just ?"

Anne glanced up ; there was the cruel eye bearing full upon her as of yore in the well remembered chamber at Yanly Manor. Now, with a little well-acted dissimulation she might have heard the great secret. She might have spoken like Robert's enemy, and his mother would have told her the mystery respecting him. She could not do it.

" Was not my estimate just ?"

" No, Mrs. Aubrey, unjust and most cruel,

most false and unnatural. Robert Aubrey is good, and noble, and generous—high minded and honourable ; his faults are those of feeling and passion, not of cold blooded debauchery and dishonesty, as you would have had me think."

She raised her eyebrows and exclaimed :

" Mon Dieu ! a grand passion—how I have been deceived by your quiet reticence and demure pale face. I pity you."

Anne was glowing with rage and resentment at this cold scorn and undisguised contempt. She was wretched and therefore irritable.

" You are far too good, Mrs. Aubrey, to waste thought or pity on me," she said, proudly.

" Am I ? You know best in what degree you deserve either."

She was in the cold, tormenting spirit now which had so terribly irritated Robert at the time of the stormy interview which Anne had

witnessed between them. She resolved not to gratify Mrs. Aubrey by a display of angry or wounded feeling, and remained silent. Mrs. Aubrey at length spoke—

“ How much money is due to you, Miss Cave ? ”

“ Nothing.”

“ You allude to the £35 I paid you on our first acquaintance.”

“ Yes.”

“ But you know that was a gift.”

“ Mrs. Aubrey, I had done nothing to deserve such a gift.”

“ You were engaged at a merely nominal salary to satisfy my very parsimonious husband. I always meant to give you more than twenty-five pounds a year.”

“ I have only been thirteen months in your family, and have received fifty pounds.”

“ You must, however, take something else. I shall at least make you accept five hundred

francs. Here is a billet de banque, you will get it cashed in the Rue Neuve des Matherins."

Now Anne was very poor, and she was going to throw herself upon the world in a foreign city without help and without friends. She resolved to take the money after all—she had earned it, and she took up the billet de banque. She knew that Mrs. Aubrey's generosity sprung from pride and pride alone—still, in pecuniary matters, she was generous, and Anne thanked her.

"What do you propose doing, Miss Cave?"

"Resting first for a week or two and then procuring daily tuition in French families to teach my own language. By this means I shall enjoy more air and more freedom."

"And you have no fear of exposing yourself in the streets of Paris unprotected?"

"Not the slightest."

She shrugged her shoulders and rose to intimate that the interview was over. Anne bowed and left her.

"Going, Miss Cave, my own Miss Cave, my darling Miss Cave; oh! why, why, why?" and Elsie flung herself in Anne's arms wildly.

Elsie, the only being on earth who really loved Anne! She kissed her, and clung to her, and wept over her.

"Reasons, Elsie, strong reasons. I will not tell you false ones. I love you too well, but I cannot tell you the true ones either. You shall come and see me. I will let you know where I live, and not a week shall pass without our seeing each other," but Elsie refused to be comforted.

Anne's little arrangements were soon made. She left her trunks behind her because she did not know where to take them, but promised to send for them soon, and after another affectionate farewell from Elsie she stepped

out into the sunny April streets, with the billet de banque in her pocket and not a friend in the world. She resolved to go to Gomazzio, as he had asked her to do so in time of need. Does this create surprise? "If Gomazzio had been the means of taking Robert from me," said Anne, "he had only hastened a catastrophe that would sooner or later have arrived. Robert had always loved Jane, and had never loved me. How heart-rending would it have been to have married him, and then discovered his terrible love for this woman afterwards. No, it was best as it was. It was worse than the rack or the flames, but it had to come, this fearful knowledge, and let it come at once. Robert loves Jane, Countess of Maine, let him marry her," said her wounded, outraged heart. Anne fancied that Gomazzio was not on Mrs. Aubrey's side after all, that he was a crafty, but not a bad man. He had offered her his friendship, and she resolved to go to him for

advice and direction. Numero vingt-neuf Boulevard des Italiens, Monsieur le docteur Gustave Gomazzio. Anne found him at home engaged at his second breakfast. He rose and stood silent with surprise before her, and with a good-tempered smile upon his ugly mouth.

“ Mademoiselle—am I awake—is it not a dream, that I see you in my apartment?”

“ No, Monsieur, I am really here.”

“ And to what event do I owe the happiness of this visit?”

“ Monsieur, I have left the Rue Taitbout—left the Aubreys altogether.”

“ Dieu merci, que c'est étonnant, et pourquoi puis-je demandér ?”

“ Monsieur, I began to find the confinement irksome. I have lately felt very poorly at times, and wish to enjoy more air, liberty, and exercise than I have hitherto done. I am anxious to find some cheap, respectable, pleasant lodgings, and then to procure some

visiting tuitions; I shall thus be more my own mistress. However, I know nothing of Paris, and remembering your offer of helping me I have ventured to come and ask you to recommend me to some apartment such as I wish for."

"Bon, ma petite, vous avez alors un peu de gran confiance en Gomazzio quoi qu'il est Italien."

"Monsieur, I place some confidence in you else I should not be here."

"Mak me the how do you do ?" said he, in execrable English, and extending his hand; Anne shook it heartily.

"Sit down," said he, in French, and Anne sat down. "Now listen to me, Mees Cave—there lives in the Rue Mont Martre, at the foot of which stands the church of St. Eustache—do you know it?"

"No, Monsieur."

"*Bien.* In that street is an hotel, excellent in all respects. It is a select boarding-house,

cheap, and clean, and good. Monsieur Prunier is the landlord ; he is French—a good, but excitable, nervous, anxious, weak-minded little man. I have no sympathy with prejudiced people ; Monsieur Prunier is terribly prejudiced."

Anne could not refrain from a smile at this paradox, but it passed unnoticed by the doctor.

" Madame Prunier, his wife, is English ; she has been a fine woman—that woman is the most clever woman of my acquaintance ; she speaks French, German, and Italian ; she could write a treatise on philosophy in either of these languages ; she has the art of pleasing her boarders, and yet she reigns among them like a queen ; her will is law ; she is full of tact and diplomacy, and yet is a most truthful and honourable person ; she makes all her own clothes, mends all the household linen, is a superlative cook, and yet is a wonderful reader—anything and everything

that you can name, that woman has read it, and could give you her opinion on it—she could head a parliamentary debate in your English House of Commons—she could write the leading article for any paper in any language I have named, and yet her house is better regulated, and her dinners better cooked, than any person's I know in Paris."

"She must be a wonderful person."

"She is; but she has one fault."

"Ah!"

"Madame Prunier is terribly prejudiced, she imagines that the English are the first nation in the world, and England the first country."

"I also, Monsieur, entertain that opinion."

"Bah! tell me what has England done for you, *ma chère*? what has the Englishman done?"

Anne coloured hotly, and Gomazzio continued:

"He has led you to suppose that he thought

of you, and loved you, while all the time he loved another woman in his own sphere. The Englishman has failed in his base designs. I am positive that you are as innocent as you are fair. You did right to leave the Aubreys —they are a sad set."

Anne could not bear to hear this. "Monsieur," she said, "you are wrong—I do not complain of the Aubreys. If you are my friend, you will not speak an unkind word of one of them."

"Not of Madame *sa mère*?"

"Not even of her."

"*Bien*, I honour you for your words. And now, in regard to the Hotel de St. Eustache; will you come with me to the Rue Mont Martre, and I will make all arrangements for you with the Pruniers."

As they turned into the street, Anne said, "Monsieur, is it necessary for me to warn you that that idea of yours, for which you have indeed no foundation, that I am or have been

in love with Robert Aubrey must be kept a profound secret? Were you to mention such a thing to the Pruniers, I should instantly leave their house."

"Am I an honourable man?" said Gomazzio. "Have I a heart—have I feeling? Mademoiselle, you do me wrong."

"Pardon, Monsieur."

They walked on in silence; it was a long way to the Rue Mont Martre. At a street crossing they encountered the handsome German officer—the Baron de Malberg; he was dressed in his regimentals; he said he had been making some official calls. Gomazzio told him that he was conducting Anne to the Hotel St. Eustache, to place her under the care of Madame Prunier.

Anne learned to her surprise that the elegant young officer was, during his stay in Paris, a resident at the hotel of the Pruniers.

"Je vous verrai encore bientôt, Mademoiselle," said he, gaily raising his cap.

Anne sighed inwardly ; she wanted none of his smiles and graces.

“ To sleep,
And by a sleep to say we end the heart-ache,
And the thousand natural ills that flesh is heir to,
'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.”

She unconsciously muttered the words aloud.

“ *Plait il*, mademoiselle,” said the doctor.

“ It is a fine day, monsieur.”

“ But you do not look fine. You are *telle-ment triste*. You have some suffering; you are right to change the scene. The cheerful society at the Hotel St. Eustache will set you right again.”

They were now in the busy, bustling Rue Mont Martre, at the foot of which stands the old church of St. Eustache. The gay and fashionable population of the Boulevards and the Champs Elysées were not to be met with here. Market women, with stands covered

with spring flowers and fruits ; fishwomen, with handkerchiefs of gay colours bound around their temples, and imparting an additional sallow tint to their dark features ; ouvriers—that class from which has sprung, at different times, such terrible deeds and blood-stained violence—ouvriers, in their blouses looking quiet and respectable. Pretty piquante grisettes, in charming little white caps, trimmed with gay ribbons ; these were the specimens of the French populace that Anne and the doctor encountered in the Rue Mont Martre.

At a tall block of buildings Gomazzio stopped, and they went into a broad general entrance or passage, and then climbed up some particularly dirty stone stairs ; not a very inviting prospect, thought Anne. They passed the first étage ; on the second, a large door with a brass plate, on which the words, “ L’Hotel St. Eustache, F. Prunier,” were stamped in black letters.

Gomazzio pulled the bell. A slovenly French waiter, who answered to the name of Jacques, opened the door. This man spoke an unintelligible patois, which Anne could never be brought to understand ; he ushered them into a room fronting the street—a room, the pink of neatness, with polished oak floor, chairs covered with crimson damask, a couch and curtains of the same, a handsome pier-glass over the mantel-shelf, a long dining-table, and a bookcase of an old fashioned make, but loaded with treasures in the shape of works by the best authors.

This was the *salle à manger* of the Hotel St. Eustache. Almost immediately Madame Prunier appeared. Anne knew her at once ; she was the pleasant-faced lady who had accosted her in the Champs Elysées. She even wore her green damask dress, and her grey hair was arranged neatly beneath a snowy cap with long lappets. The recognition was

mutual, and actuated by a simultaneous impulse they shook hands at once.

A few words from Gomazzio explained all ; he told how he had met Miss Cave at the house of an English patient, how that her health had slightly given way in consequence of—of—in short, of too close application, and that she wished for rest and recreation, and how that he had recommended her to the care of his kind friend, Madame Prunier, how that she was "*une demoiselle très gentil, très douce, très bonne;*" and, in fact, as near excellence as possible, and then the doctor rose to take leave.

Anne perceived that the species of carte blanche that the doctor enjoyed, and the confidence that he inspired, were not confined to the upper classes. Madame Prunier, who had lived eight-and-twenty years on the continent, and who entertained serious suspicions of most foreigners, Madame Prunier, the most

prudent and particular of matrons, did not hesitate to afford Anne her full confidence and protection, simply on Gomazzio's recommendation.

She called in her daughter Marie and introduced her to Anne, with a strong desire, she said, "that they might become friends." Marie Prunier, or, as Anne called her, Mary, for she loved to Anglicise her name, was short, with black hair, black eyes, and *nez retroussé*. She had what might be called a bright face, piquant though perhaps not exactly pretty. She was full of French vivacity, and a thoroughly warm heart beat beneath her modest robe of plum-coloured merino. She was a funny little thing, joyous and demonstrative, and yet, on occasions, demure to excess. She must have been two or three and twenty, at this time. It was strange to hear her address Gomazzio in rapid, fluent, perfectly rolled Parisian French, and then turn to Anne with phrases simple,

hearty, and Saxon as her own, for, from her French father and English mother, she, of course, inherited the advantage of speaking both languages without a tincture of accent.

When the doctor was gone Marie asked Anne if she should show her to her room, but her mother stopped her by remarking that Miss Cave had not yet decided what room to occupy.

So now came a business dissertation respecting francs and centimes, and it was at length settled that Anne was to occupy a small room on the fourth étage, and to dine, breakfast, and, in fact, board in the family of Madame Prunier, at the rate (including all things) of twenty-five francs a week.

The Hotel St. Eustache extended over four stories—this was the general sitting-room of those who boarded in the family—there were other and handsomer suites of rooms, which Madame Prunier let off. She engaged a commissaire to go to the Rue Taitbout for Miss

Cave's trunks, and then Mary accompanied Anne up the general staircase to the fourth étage, and showed her her room.

It was neat and clean, but bare, and much in the style of her late room in the Rue Taitbout—however, she could not afford to pay for a better one, and Madame Prunier earned her living by letting her rooms. She had, therefore, no cause to complain ; besides, Marie occupied a room precisely similar next door to hers, which she took her in to see.

"Do you like Paris ?" said Mary.

"Yes, it is beautiful."

"You don't seem cheerful, somehow," said Marie, kindly. "You'll have to cheer up here, you know."

"I cannot see how it is possible to be cheerful without some good reason. I have none, consequently I am not cheerful."

"You will soon get plenty of tuitions," said Marie ; "Dr. Gomazzio will be sure to

get you as much to do as you can manage.
Isn't he a nice fellow?"

"Yes, I don't dislike him."

"Dislike him! indeed, I should think not," said Mary, indignantly. "I am sure he is very kind and good."

"He has certainly been kind to me," said Anne, "but he dislikes England so much."

"Oh, that's all his nonsense! He is always ready to put himself out of the way to oblige an English person. He is as kind to mamma as if she were his mother. I like him. If he asked me I'd have him to-morrow."

This was said in a gay, jesting way, that might be fun and might be earnest; it was impossible to tell which; neither did Anne very much care. She used Mary's brush to smooth her hair, and washed her face and hands, and then went into the salon with Mary, looking somewhat morose and sullen. Ah, she was very wretched—"the heart

knoweth its own bitterness." She suffered deeply.

In a few days Anne felt at home in the Hotel St Eustache. They used to breakfast at eleven and dine at five, and at dinner she met with several persons of many nations. A gay, fascinating Greek widow lady, two or three grave, proud, handsome German students, most of them poor, but polished in manner and refined in mind. An American single lady, of a certain age, ditto, a French-English lady of forty-four or thereabouts, who rejoiced in the name of Late. This lady, of English birth and parentage, had been brought up in France. Her father had been a gentleman of family and fortune; he had met with reverses, died broken-hearted, and for the last ten years this, his only unmarried daughter, had been living out in different noble foreign families, at high salaries. She was an accomplished linguist and musician, and now was looking out for a re-engagement. She

asked a hundred a year. Though fair and forty, plus a few years, she was not fat, and her auburn hair and delicate complexion shewed that she had once been very pretty. She used to dress beautifully for dinner, and her manners were charming. Poor thing ! she had one weakness, she did not like to be thought more than two-and-thirty. She was a strict Catholic.

Monsieur Prunier, the husband of the strong-minded, kind-hearted Englishwoman, was a nervous, irritable little man, in delicate health. All his energies were devoted to the letting of his rooms, and the making both ends to meet, which he found difficult. The Pruniers were not rich ; he was not fond of his wife, he could not appreciate her good qualities, he was a petty tyrant, and weak-minded and prejudiced. In person he was straight, petit, and upright. His features were delicate and his complexion olive. He was, in politics, a thorough Son of the Empire and worshipper

of Napoleon. He detested the English nation with a hatred far more real than that of Gomazzio; yet, with it all, there was a warm place in his heart if one could but find it. He loved his daughter, and Marie was the peacemaker between her ill-matched parents. Madame Prunier made a great mistake when she, with her masculine mind, strong national prejudices, and warm, affectionate nature, joined herself to a man of feeble mind, narrow information, and alien birth. How had it come to pass? How do half the strange marriages that we see come to pass? "There is a skeleton in every house, there is a mystery in every life, there is a wound in every human heart." Anne respected Madame Prunier, and admired her intellect. She listened with pleasure to her conversation; she was only an hotel keeper's wife, but she was individually as true a lady as the wife of Mr. Harvey Aubrey. She had been in early youth educated in a gentleman's family, and

had been humble companion to his only daughter. How this had come about in the first place, Anne had yet to learn. She had travelled much with this family, and hence her knowledge of foreign tongues. Their name she never suffered to transpire, but enough was gathered from her conversation to form a conjecture that she had met with some love disappointment and had left them in consequence. Afterwards she entered some English family as German governess, and there met with Monsieur Prunier, who was, at that time, a wine merchant, and this family being resident in Paris, he had called there in the way of business, proposed to the governess, and, strange to say, had been accepted by her. The affection that subsisted between Mary and her mother was almost sublime—the daughter devoted, reverential, loving her mother passionately and revering her humbly—the mother adoring the child, striving to promote her interest and happiness,

self-sacrificing and tender. There was something ennobling in this love, to both of them, but they made no show, they never embraced in the presence of others. It was not at first that Anne perceived all the breadth and depth of their mutual affection.

Miss Late was one evening at dinner, discoursing with one of the grave, handsome German students aforesaid, and for this German student Anne shrewdly suspected that Marie Prunier had a *penchant*. This student, Adolph Kurtz by name, was, like Miss Late, a strict Catholic. They discoursed on the persecution of the priesthood during the reign of terror. Their rapid French was scarcely intelligible to Anne's unaccustomed ears. She listened eagerly, because she had nothing else to do just then, and employed her mind in following the idiomatic phrases and ferreting out their meaning.

At last, Miss Late turned to Anne, and said in English, "Miss Cave, I am engaged

in the Rue Taitbout as governess to one little girl—Mrs. Harvey Aubrey's family."

Anne started and coloured.

"Do you know them?" said Miss Late.

"Oh yes."

So, after dinner, Miss Late sat with Anne in a retired corner, and asked her to tell her all about the Aubreys. What a request, Miss Late! All the history of her life, and her crushed hopes, and passionate love, and her hopeless future, and her wild, untamed, bitter grief. Oh, earth! earth! thou art a hard mother to the poor and friendless of thy children.

Anne shaded her eyes with her hand, and told Miss Late, in a few, concise words, "that the Aubreys were highly respectable, and strictly honourable in their payments, quite *comme il faut*, and Elsie a sweet child."

"Why did you leave them?" asked Miss Late.

"I wanted a change," said Anne, gloomily.

Miss Late asked no more, but turning to Anne kindly said, "If you are in want of morning tuitions, I know a lady, who will be the very person to procure what you desire. Will you come with me to-morrow into the Faubourg St. Germain?"

Anne promised, and thanked her.

CHAPTER V.

ST. EULALIE.

THAT night, as Anne was about to light her candle and climb the staircase towards her chamber, Madame Prunier stopped her.

“ Miss Cave, my dear, do put down your candle and come into my room ; I have a fire there. I want to give you a biscuit and a glass of wine. Monsieur Prunier is out. I wish to talk to you.”

Anne put down the candle and followed her. The room was snug and cheerful ; Monsieur Prunier liked comfort. Anne sat

down on a cushioned chair, and Madame shut the door.

"I am going to take a great liberty, and perhaps you will box my ears and walk out of my house; but, my dear girl, I see that you have some untold grief; you do not eat, you look as though you seldom slept. In the language of our great poet, 'your eyes seem heavy with the weight of unshed tears.' I don't want to pry into your grief, but I cannot bear to see a young person, who ought to be cheerful, pining away as you are doing. Mary is so different. She is like a sunbeam in a house, and yet we are poor people. We have to work hard; we have not even saved anything for our child. She is well educated, and eventually will have to go out as a governess. She has no prospect of marriage, for in this country marriage, except for interested motives, is out of the question. 'Tis not a bright prospect, but Mary is always happy."

"Why?" said Anne, absently and abruptly.

"Because she is in the path of duty and blessed with health and energy."

Madame Prunier was not the least religious; her tactics were moral, her motives high, but beyond a kind of Pharisaical duty—if we may use the term in regard to a lady whose character we revere, and whose excellence we approve with all our heart—she had no idea.

"I am in health, Madame," said Anne; "I can earn my bread; I think I have done my duty, but I believe my heart is breaking. I cannot shed one single tear—I am too wretched."

"Then you are very wrong," said Madame, "and very weak."

"Perhaps so, but I cannot help it."

Madame Prunier took a bottle of wine off her drawers and poured some into a tumbler, she then put in two large lumps of white sugar, and walked up to the fire, and from a

little brass kettle she poured hot water over the wine and sugar.

“Drink that,” said Madame Prunier, handing her the glass.

“Thank you, Madame,” said Anne, putting it to her lips.

“Take a good draught,” said Madame.

Anne complied, and half emptied the glass at one drink.

“Do you like it?” said the hostess.

“Yes, Madame.”

“Well then, eat that,” handing Anne a sponge cake; but the cake lay untasted on her lap.

“Why is your grief so terrible?” asked Madame. “If you would rather not tell me keep your own counsel, but I am a mother. I feel for you, you may trust me.”

“I know it, Madame—I read it in your honest grey eyes. I have not a friend in the world—I will tell you my grief. I love distractedly. I have been deceived by one who

meant not to deceive—there is the history of my grief in few words."

Anne then told Madame Prunier all. She told her of her mother's desertion, and of Jane Countess of Maine, and when her tale was over tears came at last to her relief, and she sobbed hysterically.

Madame Prunier laid a kind hand on her shoulder, " You will get over this," she said. " You have had a lucky escape."

It is the fashion to cry this in the world if a girl is deceived where she has loved. Oh! did they but know, those who preach this cold selfish doctrine, did they but know the deep intensity with which the yearning heart clings still and still to the beloved one, though he be false, and base, and cruel—though dishonour and shame have covered his face, and the world's finger of scorn be justly raised against him, they would cease to insist in that stern manner, " You have had a lucky escape," " Your lover is a villain and

a forger, he is transported beyond seas, what a fate would have been yours had he been faithful as yourself. You in your comfortable home, protected and cherished, while he works bound in a cavern of the earth by chains of iron. A lucky escape."

"Would that I shared his chains, his hunger, his poverty, his cold, his nakedness. Were he to spurn me, with his feet, I could still wash them with my tears, still wipe them with the hairs of my head."

Some such passionate words as these passed Anne's lips.

Madame Prunier brought cold water and bathed her temples, and spoke kindly to her—tenderly, and with true womanly gentleness.

Then Anne shed tears less burning; more like the latter rain that falls upon the earth; she felt subdued and soothed, if not comforted.

“ Will you listen to an early reminiscence of my own ?” said Madame Prunier.

“ Willingly, Madame.”

“ When I was young,” said Madame, “ I lived in a family as companion to a spoiled, selfish, beautiful girl. My parents were dead. My father had placed a spendthrift gentleman under obligation. As some return, with some notion of justice and gratitude, I was adopted into this family. Besides this daughter there was one son, Philip, handsome, daring, bold, brave, generous. I loved him as you love now—I would have died for Philip. Here, in Paris, we passed much of our time ; those were the days of the old régime, before the revolution had even given a sign of its approach ; those were the days of pride and usurpation ; here, in this country, I have seen the poor crushed beneath the chariot wheels of the noblesse. The family with whom I lived were English, the father was a

gambler, and they were in debt and difficulty, but their pride was frightful. I was often cruelly scorned by the mother and daughter. Never by Philip, yet with it all, with him aristocratic prejudices ran high. His mother tried to impress on him that he must make his fortune by a wealthy match. Philip did not return my love ; he was gentle, chivalrous, manly, and tender towards me. Now that I am a wife and mother, now that my hair is grey, now that the passions of my youth are at rest, I can look back and say that I was not beloved. There has been a time when the consciousness of that fact would have drawn tears as of blood from my eyes ; but Philip loved another—the daughter of his nurse, a low-bred woman of mingled French and English extraction. The nurse had been kept in the family as a hanger-on and attendant. She was a fearful woman, was Clotilde Marlin —her father had been an English artizan,

her mother was French ; she had lived in this family twenty-two years, and nursed both the children. Her husband was dead ; she had one daughter, a black-eyed fine girl—a mere grisette. Philip, the boy, Philip, refined, proud, intelligent, loved this girl—loved her to madness. It was a mystery to me inscrutable ; well, he married this girl in an English Protestant place of worship in Paris. This marriage was kept a profound secret ; the girl's mother knew not of it. Would to heaven that she had known, but the young wife was bound to secrecy. I am only giving you a rough sketch of facts unvarnished and hasty. The mother discovered that the daughter was about to become a mother, the nurse's suspicions fell, no matter how, on Philip, and the daughter, vowed to secrecy, would not clear herself or her husband from the imputation of guilt. I knew all. Philip chose me as his confidante, and sent me to

attend to his wife and infant son in their chamber in the Rue Richlieu. Speak, child ! have I known what it is to suffer?"

" You have," exclaimed Anne, kissing the pale hand over which she leant.

" Well, Clotilde—the young Clotilde, took cold and died. Poor thing ! I wept at her loss for Philip's sake. He was nearly distracted, but, strange to say, his pride would not let him avow his marriage even to his wife's mother, and Clotilde, choosing to assert that her daughter had died of grief and shame, vowed revenge. The child Philip placed out at nurse. Then I left that family for ever ; they were cruel to me ; the daughter was unjust and insulting. I never saw any of them again, save Philip."

" And where did you see him ?"

" It was in the year 1793," said Madame Prunier, " that business brought me to Paris in company with a family where I lived as governess ; they were Republicans, they were

safe. Oh, heaven ! the fearful sights I saw there ; but, as I stood at a window in the Rue Richlieu, I saw a sight which froze my blood in my veins. I saw a tumbril rolling towards the Place Louis XV.; in it stood a young man, noble, fair, and pale, and with wavy, auburn hair. It was—oh, God ! it was he—Philip. Do not ask me what I did or said—that beautiful head was severed by the guillotine ! Clotilde Marlin had denounced Philip to the convention. She took away her grand-child, and what became of either I know not, but I heard the name of the denouncer of Philip from Monsieur Dubois, with whom I lived. Now have I not unfolded a tale of suffering ?”

“ Madame, how have you lived ?”

“ I have lived for duty. I am a woman of resolution and principle. I said to myself, if my life is wretched, still I must try and render it useful to others. I have done this and have been rewarded. The love of my

child has comforted me for the loss of Philip.
And now, good night, and God bless you!"

"But stop, Madame, one word more and forgive me—What was the Christian name of the spoiled haughty sister of your Philip?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because Mr. Aubrey's first wife had a spendthrift father, and she was brought up almost entirely here in Paris; she had one brother Philip, who I have been told perished in the French Revolution."

"Her name was Maude."

"Maude Haughton?"

"Yes—then, my child, you and I are bound by a strange mystery together. We have loved, each in our generation, a member of the same family. Your false Robert is the nephew of my unhappy Philip."

Madame Prunier and Anne remained standing in mute surprise for several seconds—at last Madame said—

"Maude, the beautiful, proud, self-willed

Maude, and did she marry an Englishman?
Strange, strange, strange!"

Madame Prunier made an impatient gesture
and said—

"No more of that, child, 'an thou lovest
me,' as Shakespeare has it. We have had
enough of love tales for one night. We are
making a whole life's business to consist in
loving and being beloved. Oh, child! life is
full of stern realities—some day you will wake
up to consciousness of this—you will see that
you have your part to play on the world's
stage, that it is not enough to do to sit
down, and weep fruitless tears and heave
hopeless sighs—duty, and sense, and honour,
all call for us to be up and doing. You have
not the eye or the brow of a mere sentimental
dreaming Miss. Be brave, be strong, be
patient, and enduring, and you shall find your
reward."

She sighed heavily as she spoke, and a mist
gathered over her bright blue eyes—

"To-night I am going to make out all the bills of my housekeeping expenses during the week, and when that is done I shall sit up and darn some of Monsieur Prunier's hose, and it is now nearly eleven o'clock. Yes, I have work for two hours."

"You rise again before eight?"

"Yes, I find it suits me better, and now child, good night, go to bed and sleep. To-morrow rise with the resolve to look at life with different eyes. Why is your existence to be made useless and wretched because of the deceit of one selfish bad man? No, not a word in his favour. He is, he must be a bad man." And then Madame Prunier almost put Anne out of her room.

"Good woman—kind, brave, faithful, true-hearted woman; but oh," said Anne, "did she think with that little host of maxims to preach down my loving, breaking heart?"

The next morning Miss Late breakfasted early with Anne. She was going to intro-

duce her to a friend of hers in the Faubourg St. Germain, who would be likely to procure such teaching as she desired.

"You are very good, Miss Late," said Anne.

"Good, ah, no ! would that I were—but I do feel anxious for your welfare. Living in hotels is very expensive, and should your money run short before you have obtained employ, it would be very awkward, would it not?"

"Very awkward," repeated Anne, with her thoughts far from the subject, though that was certainly of the greatest importance to her then.

They went out together, and Anne was taken into the stately precincts of the aristocratic St. Germain. In a secluded street, where stood large houses surrounded by high walls, Miss Late paused before a great door in the wall, and she rung a bell. A yelping cur set up a shrill response, and presently a little

old woman dressed in black crape, with a cross and rosary of black wood at her girdle, and a white cloth bound round her temples, opened the door, and said politely—

“Entrez, Mesdames, entrez.”

So this was a Nun !

The gloomy house which stood back among the trees must then be a Convent ? Yes, the Convent of St. Eulalie. Through a covered passage into such a queer room, the Convent parlour looking out upon a secluded part of the great dull garden, polished bare cak floor, hard uninviting chairs and tables, a beautiful crucifix carved in ivory on the chimney-piece, a bright wood fire on the hearth. Nothing more, this was the Convent parlour, the parlour of St. Eulalie !

Presently there entered a lady of middle age, whom not even the hideous conventional dress could render otherwise than graceful and *distingué*. She must have been of angelic beauty in her youth ; even now it was a face

of rare fascination, the eyes were large and singularly bright, they were light grey, they flashed, they softened, they searched, as no human eyes that Anne had ever seen before or since had done, though the Lady Abbess, for such was her rank, must have numbered half a century of years, as we reckon time. Her complexion was fair and rosy as a girl's—the gift to fascinate at will was hers—she, a woman, whose years were fading into the sear and yellow leaf, had the power to attract, to enchant, shall we say to entrap? God knows, we believe she meant well, and that her diplomacy, however we stern, truth-loving Britons, might object to it, was still undertaken with the honest desire of saving souls and bodies from the dangers of the bottomless pit.

Is the Catholic doctrine a selfish policy? or does it, on the contrary, teach abnegation of self, and the sacrificing of all things to one great cause? We cannot say, we will not

judge, but only write down events as they occurred during the short acquaintance that Anne had with the Lady of St. Eulalie.

The ladies embraced in foreign fashion, saluting on either cheek, then Madame de Dauph  (such was the family name of the Abbess) made Anne a slight inclination of the head, and addressed her in the most perfect English. She was thoroughly amazed at the fluency and elegance with which this Frenchwoman mastered our island language, for it is rare to find a French person, resident in France, who can speak English even tolerably.

"You are, I perceive, very young," she said, gracefully tendering Anne her hand, "but it is impossible that one so charming should long continue without friends even in a foreign city. You must cheer up, and lay aside that sweetly mournful air. Nay, I will not be refused, I must even be permitted to kiss that young cheek so pale, so pretty,

and so pensive," and she suited the action to the word, and afterwards looked into Anne's eyes with an apparent half-puzzled air. " You do not tell me, Miss Late, that this fair young girl is the same you were speaking of last week, and who wishes to obtain pupils, and who is poor ? "

" The same," said Miss Late, respectfully, " the very same."

" Mais, ma chere c'est étonnant, elle a quelque chose de noble, de je ne sais quoi, mais enfin elle a l'air comme il faut."

Now who will say that flattery is not sweet and soothing to poor human nature? Those who profess to hate it are the more open to it. Perhaps Anne was not more fond of it than most people, but we will confess that the few rapidly spoken words of Madame La Duchesse de Dauph  (for such was her rank apart from her conventional dignities), and Anne was aware that she stood in the presence of one of the daughters of the very highest French

nobility—we repeat that those sweetly spoken words pleased her not a little. If this ultra-refined, almost royally born, charming, fascinating woman was so struck with her air *comme il faut*, and pale, pensive, pretty face, perhaps she had not tried to step so very far out of her element, when she aspired to become the wife of an English gentleman. We know that these thoughts written down read very foolishly. Anne should have been the first to laugh at them herself in that case; but as it was, the words spoken in haste, and apparently not intended for her ear, had a wonderfully pleasant sound.

“ And so you desire, Pauvrette, to obtain daily tuitions? I am often applied to, by families both noble and bourgeois, in regard to des Institutrices Anglaises. You play?”

“ Yes, Madame.”

“ Ah, fear not, I will find you what you desire, without doubt. And what salary do you wish?”

"Madame, I have not fixed. I desire only what is just."

"Comme elle est gentille," said the Duchesse de Dauph  (Anne never could forget for one instant that she was the Duchesse de Dauph ), turning to Miss Late.

"Well, my child, your salary for six hours' instruction should be about two thousand francs, and you ought to dine with the family —thus, your expenses would be limited to just your tea, your room, and, perhaps, your coffee in the morning."

How sweetly kind of the Abbess to descend to these details!

"You can give references?" she continued, with a bright smile.

"Oh, yes, Madame."

"Good, my dear child. Are you fond of music?"

"Devotedly so, Madame."

"Can you spare your charming young

friend to me, for this evening?" continued the Abbess.

Miss Late explained that her charming young friend's time was entirely at her own disposal, and then Madame de Dauph  turned to Anne again.

"My child, will you come here this evening, at six. We are going to have a celebrated mass sung in the Convent Chapel—it is a f te of the Blessed Virgin." Here she crossed herself, devoutly. "Will you come? And I will send you back to your Hotel in a voiture."

At that time Anne had never heard a mass, and she was really as much pleased at the idea as she could have been, at that time, at anything of the kind. She promised, then, to come; but her thanks were languid, and her eye sad, for the Abbess embraced her warmly at parting, and whispered, as she did so:

"Poor innocent lamb, and you have no

mother near you. Would that I could be one to you."

The tone, the warmth, the lady-like ease, the refined sensibility of the whole action, was irresistible. Anne loved that nun, then and there, upon the spot. An indescribable emotion prompted her to return and embrace her once more.

"I will certainly come, dear Madame," she said.

Once out in the street, Miss Late asked Anne what she thought of Madame La Duchesse de Dauph , Abbess of St. Eulalie. Her reply was enthusiastic. Miss Late looked pleased.

"There is that in our religion," said the lady, with a smile, "which tends to the laying aside of pride and prejudice. Where would you find a Protestant Duchess who would embrace and fraternize with two poor, friendless governesses, as Madame de Dauph  has done? It is the same with our clergy,"

she continued, presently, “ however highly born, associated, and educated, the Catholic Priest is the father of his flock; the poorest, the lowest, the meanest of his parishioners may weep out his sorrows on the holy father’s bosom ; in this respect the priesthood follow the example of our great lawgiver—Christ—they say, ‘ Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ ”

Anne did not speak, and, after a pause, Miss Late continued :

“ In your church it is different. The selfish, money-loving Pastor climbs, once a week, into his pulpit, and exhorts his congregation. In the week he passes by his poorer brethren with a distant nod ; he is always too proud to visit any but the very poor—(which is done in a pharasaical spirit, and in such a way that the poor wretches are all the time in perfect dread of their fine visitor)—and those whom he considers his

equals. For the mediocre rank, the tradesman, the schoolmaster, the struggling, respectable class, your priest has no sympathy whatever; he hardly knows their names. If they be ill and dying, perchance, he will call; but it is as a stranger, and for the first time our national mauvaise honte renders the interview, on both sides, unpleasant."

Miss Late paused. There was much, very much of truth in her remarks. At last, Anne said :

" I know one Protestant curate who is all and everything a priest ought to be. His whole life is, and has been, one sublime, self sacrifice ; he has marked out for himself a path of duty, and he follows it bravely with Christian humility and heroic devotion."

She then, suppressing names, gave her a sketch of Charles Higham's trials and sacrifices. When she had ceased, Miss Late said, coldly :

" Your curate is the exception, not the

rule. With us, a priest who should swerve in the least degree from such a perfect line of conduct would be the exception."

That evening, having excused herself from the public dinner at the Hotel St. Eustache and dined privately on a bunch of raisins, a roll, and a cup of chocolate, Anne dressed neatly, and threaded her way through the lively streets, across the Tuileries' gardens, and the Place de la Concorde, into the Faubourg St. Germain, and found her way into the Rue, where, secluded in its stately gardens, stood the Convent of St. Eulalie. She was admitted by the little old nun, the portress of the morning, and with smiles and bows she piloted her through a covered way again into the convent parlour, and there she left her. Presently there entered the dear Abbess ; she clasped her hand, saying :

" You are late, my child, the mass has begun—follow me."

Anne followed the tall stately figure through

passages paved with white stone, into a chapel filled with devotees—the devotees of Paris, jewelled plumed elegant forms, mantled in velvet, decked in rich drooping feathers, with white hands clasped in prayer, on which gleamed many a rare gem—but not a head was raised as she entered; every face was hidden, every knee was bent upon the stones. The altar of the Virgin had gold or gilt railings before it. It was covered with blue velvet, and offerings of gold and silver stood upon it. Within a railed enclosure the priests were offering up prayers in a low chanting tone.

Presently the nuns, who were hidden from view, raised their voices, and the swelling music of the organ pealed through the chapel. They chanted until Anne's heart beat fast and thick. She knelt down and hid her face—she wept. Oh, why were their voices so pitilessly sweet? One voice seemed to her excited fancy like the voice of the Arch-

angel ; it spoke to her very heart, though what it said she knew not. It was not soothing or consoling, neither was it threatening or admonitory, but it spoke—it spoke to her, it thrilled through her frame, it stirred her inmost nature—she sobbed hysterically.

Presently there chimed in with it a voice like a Seraphim's, sweet, plaintive, pleading, clear as the sound of a silver bell, refreshing as the cadence of falling water.

Oh, it was sublime ! This voice seemed to speak peace to her soul, to bid the troubled waves that broke over it be still. The mass was ended, the devotees hurried out. Anne felt a hand placed upon her arm ; she rose and followed the abbess once more into the convent parlour.

“ It is not necessary to ask you, my dear child,” said Madame de Dauph , “ if you have been pleased with our singers. I perceive that you have been delighted.”

“Oh, yes, Madame.”

“Well, my child, come again; come as often as you like. Whenever we have music in the chapel we shall be glad to see you.”

“Thank you, Madame.”

“It is too late for you to return to your hotel on foot, through the streets of Paris, and alone. I have sent to hire a voiture for you. Meanwhile sit down. Let me give you a glass of eau sucrè, flavoured with orange flowers. It is an excellent thing for the spirits and for weak nerves.”

Anne shuddered inwardly—were her nerves become so weak and her spirits so broken that she was to be pitied at every turn? Pity is akin to contempt. These good women, the refined high-bred Abbess of St. Eulalie, and the honest, kind-hearted, sensible mistress of the hotel, felt for her pity, unmixed and sincere; but the world that lay before her—that world with which she must shortly battle to win bread and shelter, would it not soon

begin to point its finger of scorn at the melancholy, listless creature, called Anne Cave? Yes, yes, she must rouse herself, she must learn to simulate, to conceal, but how?

“Taste that,” said the Abbess, standing before her and stirring the eau sucrè, with a silver spoon, “taste that.”

“Is grief a thing to be treated like a bodily ailment? Are we to drink hot wine and sugared water when our hearts are breaking?”

She did not speak these words, but they passed through her mind, and she was certain the Abbess read their meaning on her face.

“It is well to soothe the nerves,” said Madame de Dauphè, “whatever be the cause of this agitation, you will find yourself calm, even cheerful, when you have swallowed my essence of orange flowers.”

Anne swallowed her essence of orange flowers and thanked her.

“ Now, my child, I do not ask for your confidence. I have no right to it. I perceive that you have some grief, and I can divine its cause. I do not ask for names, and dates, and particulars. Those are your secrets, but I am well enough versed in human nature to know that there is but one cause for an eye so mournful, a brow so sad, a cheek so wasted in a young girl like yourself. Ah, sweet one, it is a terrible time, that time of youth with its gushing affections, its ready belief in everything that looks beautiful ; its enthusiastic admiration for all that appears good and noble. It is the time when the passions hold fearful sway over the whole being, when to love appears to be to live, and to be deceived seems death. Like our first parents, thrust out of paradise, the deluded young worshipper of a clay idol is turned out of the Eden he had planted for himself. The world, the real, cold, hard, and heartless world, is his home henceforth; like the heathens, in

Greek fable, he would fain drink of the river of Lethe, but he cannot. There seems to be no balm in Gilead for him, no waters of forgetfulness ; he must toil on and bear his own burden ; he would fain die, but he dares not, and so he suffers on.”

The last words were said as though soliloquising—the Abbess turned from Anne, and bent her tall graceful form slightly. Anne could not avoid saying :

“ You have experienced this, madame ?”

She turned round upon her almost fiercely, and with an expression of boundless astonishment upon her fine and speaking countenance—

“ I experienced it, child ! what ?”

Anne felt abashed ; but still she said one word—

“ Love !”

“ Child, you insult me—you are ignorant ; so I pity, I pardon you from my soul ; but that is a word, which, in the sense you attri-

bute to it, has never been permitted to pass my lips. I have always been pure in soul and mind, and as free from even the shadow of a stain of earthly passion as our ‘blessed mother’ herself. I was the bride of Heaven at fifteen years old; I, the daughter and sole heiress of the Duke de Dauph , entered the convent of St. Eulalie of my own free will. I left family, fortune, friends, the prospects of marriage the most brilliant, I left all cheerfully. Has not our Saviour said, ‘Leave all and follow me?’ Well, child, I have left all, I have never once regretted it.”

The abbess spoke truth; her fair and placid face lighted up by those grey eyes so calm, so thoughtful, so penetrating, that face with its delicate bloom unfaded by time, bore not the slightest trace of the storms which are brewed by the passions. Mind, and intellect, and feeling sat enthroned on the smooth pure forehead, the beautiful mouth expressed compassion and kindness, but never had those

eyes burned with love's fires, never had jealousy paled that roseate cheek, never had wild words of passion or anger passed those slender lips. No ; the abbess was and ever had been pure and passionless as the marble figure of the virgin in the convent chapel. And Anne felt abashed before her as though she stood in the presence of some superior being, and she blushed red hot with shame to think that she loved, with such an intense and all absorbing love, a man who cared nothing for her, while this lady of the convent had never given a thought to aught but Heaven.

“ Has my child ever thought she should like to know a little more about our religion ? ” said the abbess, with a smile ; “ you know, my dear, you Protestants have strange ideas about us. I have been the means of converting many who were most bigoted. If you would read a little book, which I will lend you, called the ‘ Church of the Testament,’ you will find many old prejudices set aside.”

And the abbess handed Anne a gaily bound little volume, entitled, "The Church of the Testament."

She took it, and promised to read it. What if there should be something in the Roman religion, after all? What if there should be comfort and peace for her in the bosom of the Church? She left the abbess with thanks, with embraces, with promises to read her book, and to call again.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW days after, on a somewhat sultry evening, the windows were thrown open, and the perfume of the roses, which grew in boxes on the balcony of the hotel, was carried in pleasant whiffs to the company as they sat at dinner. Anne was dressed simply and coolly in muslin, ditto Mary Prunier. Miss Late, who had not yet left for the Rue Taitbout, but who purposed doing so the next day, was most elaborately decorated in pale blue silk; auburn tresses puffed out becomingly; golden

bracelets, on her white, plump arms; and a splendid turquoise brooch, a gift from some titled Italian lady (with whom she had lived as Institutrice), fastening together her collar of Brussels lace. She was, even now, a fine woman, despite her forty-eight years, and she dearly loved admiration, albeit her notions of propriety were most excruciatingly strict, and her opinion of the forwardness of English girls most severe — of this more anon.

Miss Late talked with her usual volubility in French, with a handsome, grave German, about twenty-four years of age; but she appeared quite unconscious of the disparity in their years. She smiled, she blushed, she related piquante little anecdotes.

Anne watched her gravely, and began to speculate with herself in her usual cynical fashion about her while she swallowed her soup. "She was a most devoted Catholic, she was enthusiastic in the faith, she was over

religious for a Catholic, but that did not prevent her attending balls, playing cards, going to the Opera, dressing like a girl of eighteen, coquetting with young men, and yet she must be forty-eight. She looks forty-eight, yet perhaps one ought to allow for wear and tear and worry—perhaps she isn't more than forty—her hair is unmixed with grey and her complexion pink and clear ; she is perhaps forty-four. Dear me, fancy an English religious single lady of forty, or five and forty, in—say the good town of Felton, or my native village of Kiverton. What a difference ?

“The pious spinster of that ilk would disdain all putting on of apparel ; she would wear brown, and grey, and drab. She would walk about with her basket of tracts—she would shudder at the sight of a card, and at the idea of a ball her inmost spirit would revolt—the thought of a flirtation would hardly enter her honest head, that head sheltered, not decorated in the unbecoming bonnet, and even if she be

suspected of a weakness for the curate, he is so much younger than herself that it resolves itself into a mere motherly penchant." And so the excellent Miss Prims and Miss Goods and Miss Wrights of Provincial England go on their way rejoicing, surrounded by their subjects, the Sunday school children, and supported by the Prime Ministers, the Curates. All hail to the quiet, unobtrusive sisterhood. Much good have they effected, excellent are their intentions, and almost always blameless their lives. Have we sneered at them in the last few lines? we don't mean to. God knows they are better than we are, and as for Miss Late, with her fair hair and pink cheeks and flirting ways, and her devotion on occasions, and her intolerance for our church, we begin shrewdly to suspect Miss Late a little, and to say to her mentally, "Miss Late, ma'am, I'm afraid you are a humbug." Well, the German with whom Miss Late converses has fixed his melancholy grey eyes on Anne,

and presently he addresses her, and she is at a loss to reply to him. She has sat so silent that he supposes her quite ignorant of French, and he labours under the impression that he can talk a little English, for he has learned it at school, and he can read it he thinks pretty well, so he inquires “If Anne likes going up the chimneys in Paris;” as he puts the absurd question with all his nation’s solemnity of manner, Anne becomes sensible of the tittering of Miss Late, and she replies as seriously as he has inquired: “I have never been up a chimney, Monsieur.”

Miss Late here has recourse to her pocket-handkerchief, and as Anne’s gravity is undisturbed, and her face unlighted by a smile, the intelligent face of Adolph Kurtz wears a troubled expression.

“The chimneys,” he repeats, waving his hand a little impatiently.

“No, Monsieur,” and Anne shakes her head.

"But it's pretty, it's fine," continues the handsome student, returning to the charge; "it's good."

"For the health, Monsieur ?" inquires Anne, gravely.

Here Miss Late addressed her sharply.

"Why don't you explain it to him? these jokes are thought very badly of abroad. He will despise you when he comprehends it. Indeed, you must be careful. It does not do to be too free with foreigners, they don't understand it."

Anne feels perfectly amazed at the temper of Miss Late. She is unhappy, and unhappy people are soon angry. She resolves to be angry with Miss Late, so she explains nothing, and leaves Adolph Kurtz in happy ignorance respecting things in general and chimneys in particular.

The next day Miss Late spread her wings and took flight to the Rue Taitbout. Her pale blue silk and auburn tresses, her tur-

quoise brooch and golden bracelets, ceased to adorn the salon of an evening at the Hotel St. Eustache. Adolph Kurtz talked all dinner time to Mary Prunier and occasionally addressed Anne, but never any more in English after the affair of the chimneys. Anne sometimes went into the Tuileries gardens to meet poor Elsie, for Miss Late was kind in that, and brought the poor child there to see her. She found Elsie looking very pale and delicate.

She grew tall—very tall and slender. She was becoming outwardly in manner and appearance more like a model Miss Aubrey, but the loving heart remained unchanged, and the child-like simplicity was still there. She never liked Miss Late. Miss Late never liked her. The genuine, hearty, frank nature had no sympathy with the foreign-cultured Institutrice.

“I hate French,” Elsie would say to Anne, doggedly, “and I always shall, even when I

know it well ; still I know I must learn it, and I try to give Miss Late as little trouble as I can."

"That's right, darling."

"I'm very hard worked," continued Elsie. "Miss Late takes me to the Cours for three hours together, then at night I have to study German. I have no companions and no amusements ; I wish I was back again at Yanly."

Anne wished it, too, for her sake—the different hours and different life she was leading seemed to tell sadly on her frame. Anne wound her arm tightly round Elsie—they sat under the trees on the ground, and she kissed warmly the cheek once so rosy, now so pale and wasted.

"Robert is married," said Elsie, "at last, married in London, to that Countess de Maine, and George is engaged to Mademoiselle de Villiers ; and we heard from papa yesterday, and papa is ill."

News, news, from a child's guileless lips ; married—lost to her for ever ! well, now he has his Jane—his idol. She is his own. Will that idolatrous worship continue ? or will the prize pall in possession and the idol become clay ?

" You seem so sad, dear Miss Cave."

" Do I, Elsie. I have no business to be sad. I have no time for sad thoughts. I have enough to do to think of getting pupils, and I find it so difficult. I can hear of nothing. Where is Dr. Gomazzio ?"

" He is gone to Italy in a great hurry—something secret—I don't know what."

" Well, Elsie, good bye, and God bless you ; here comes Miss Late. I have to go to the Faubourg St. Germain."

Anne hurried away, and now as the old Scotch song says—

" To think of him, would be a sin ! "

" A sin ! oh, then I shall often sin, I fear.

Robert, Robert, false and cruel—false and selfish—you have blighted my life—you have broken my heart—you have crushed me in my youth.” She uttered these words aloud, and then she sank on the ground and sobbed tears—angry tears—the first angry feelings that she had ever experienced for Robert were with her now; with the bitterness came strength. She dried her eyes, she walked in the direction of St. Eulalie.

The Abbess had appointed to meet her that morning, and she hoped to find that she had some pupils for her.

CHAPTER VII.

THE VALPINS.

“ Vous êtes bien tard, mon enfant,” said Madame de Dauphè, entering the Convent parlour, where Anne had been waiting for her about five minutes ; then, without waiting for her excuses, she added, “ Come with me into the Classe,” and she led her into a large oak-floored room with coloured glass windows and built in an octagonal form ; this was the Classe or School-room, for St. Eulalie had a Pensionnat des demoiselles attached to it, and between two and three hundred of the daugh-

ters of the French noblesse were educated there. During the numerous visits that Anne had paid to the Convent, she never came across any of the jeunes élèves but once, and that was in crossing a stone passage, accompanied by Madame de Dauph . A door in the wall opened, and coming up some cold-looking stone steps, leading from, heaven knows where, she saw about a dozen young girls, most of whom appeared to be very pretty ; they wore little white lace caps and white dresses, which Anne supposed was the uniform of the school ; they carried books in their hands, as though they had been receiving some lesson, possibly of music, or some foreign language. They marched on with that demure look of innocence, mingled with hauteur, that we invariably notice as the characteristic of the French jeune fille of high breeding, and which gives us we do not know what impression of hypocrisy and deceit ; they looked at Anne with scarce any appar-

ent surprise, and then lowered their eyes with a tremendous assumption of modesty, and they passed away like a dream, white caps and all, nor did she see whither they wound their steps.

“ Asseyez vous, ma chère,” said the Abbess, and Anne sat down. “ My child, I yesterday spoke of you to Madame la Comtesse de l’ Orme, who has two little daughters desirous of learning English. I mentioned you. I spoke of you as a good and clever girl. The Comtesse would have engaged you at my recommendation—she would have given you two thousand francs without a murmur ; you would have been *bien placée*, but on hearing that you were Protestant she raised her hands, she would not engage you, my dear. I fear this difficulty will long keep you out of a situation in France.”

Was this to be the end of Anne’s visits to St. Eulalie ? Was she to become a Catholic ?

Was this at the bottom of all the Abbess's kindness?

Often during the last few weeks had she been summoned to the Convent, and always had Madame de Dauph e amused her with promises of speedy employment, and generous emolument. She had lent her books, clever, controversial books, whose subtle arguments had puzzled and perplexed her powers to refute, and now this was the termination, become a catholic or I can do nothing for you.

Oh! Abbess, with the penetrating grey eyes, the winning smile, the graceful bearing, the kindly voice, why did you descend to petty deceits and subterfuges, when your aim was to try and win an immortal soul? Such a great end should have disdained such little means. We have read that the persecution the Roman church has suffered, and the distrust with which she is regarded, have ren-

dered concealment necessary to her peace and safety. On this hypothesis Madame de Dauph  acted—so do hundreds in her church—but in attempting to win over the English we are astonished that the catholics abroad do not proceed in a less covert and clandestine manner. As a nation, we are singularly truth-loving—subterfuge disgusts, white lies annoy us, we feel annoyed, tricked, and cheated, and we turn angrily away.

All Madame de Dauph 's tales about Contesses with children wishing to learn English, rich bourgeoise with young daughters for whom they desired English companions, all these tales then were false. Anne had been enticed to the convent by Miss Late, and amused and detained there by the Abbess—not out of pure philanthropic kindness, as we had at first supposed, but with the hope that she might become a Catholic. She resolved that she would never enter the portals of St. Eulalie again. She did not tell the

Abbess this, she had not the heart; she felt even sorry for her disappointment, but she still determined not to give up the faith of her fathers, come what would.

“Our church,” said Madame de Dauph , now speaking boldly, “is the one church without blemish, without division. Look round you—look at your own most unhappy establishment as you call it, see how it is split and divided. Is that, with its high church and low church, its endless dissensions and jealousies, is that like Christ’s flock on earth? No, no, child, you must see that you are wrong, do you not?”

“Yes, Madame, we are far from perfect.”

“If you are far from perfect, my dear child, you are wrong.”

“Yes, Madame.”

“Then who is right? Are not we? Is not our faith built on Christ? Do not we obey him to the letter of the law? You have read the ‘Church of the Testament,’ my child?”

“ Yes, Madame.”

“ What do you think of it ?”

“ Madame, I cannot refute its arguments.”

“ Then,” said the Abbess, with a joyous smile, “ If you cannot refute its arguments, you are a Catholic in heart already, and oh ! my dear girl, how awful will be your responsibility if you turn from the true faith.”

Anne did not speak, and then Madame de Dauph  rose and, placing her hand on her shoulder, said “ Go home now, and ponder over what I have told you, go home and come again to-morrow. The Countess will wait for you till next week. I told her I had hopes of converting you.”

Anne took the white and still beautiful hand of the Abbess in hers, she even left a kiss upon it—she could not resist the action, for the fascination she exercised was extreme, but she walked out of the Classe firmly, and

down the passage, and into the front garden, and out into the street, and has never seen the Abbess since, nor entered the precincts of St. Eulalie. Anne had now been six weeks at the Hotel St. Eustache. She had spent a great deal of money. She was in want of summer clothing. She had no prospect of employment, she was alone in a foreign city. Doubtless these hard outward circumstances were a means of diverting her thoughts and directing them into a healthier channel. Soon, unless she bestirred herself, food and raiment and shelter would fail her, she must look out for herself now in earnest, she must dream no longer. Pursuing this train of thoughts she walked through gay splendid Paris, from the stately Faubourg St. Germain to the bourgeois bustling Rue Mont Martre, and about an hour before the dinner time she found herself closeted with Madame Prunier in her own chamber. She had petitioned for this interview, and she gave her a

rapid sketch of her introduction to, and acquaintance with the Abbess of St. Eulalie, its termination, her state of poverty, and she ended by saying, "Madame Prunier, in a little while I shall be unable to pay you for my board and lodging."

"What must I do then? Do you think I shall turn you out?"

"I should turn myself out."

"I know you would; you need not boast of your independence to me; I know your character by heart."

"Then what must I do, Madame?"

"It is a difficult thing for a young English person to obtain a situation in France at first, unless her knowledge of French be more perfect than yours is—I speak of a nice situation, such as you ought to fill, and are fitted to fill."

"Then, Madame Prunier, I must take some situation which is not nice."

"Are you serious?"

“ Perfectly.”

Madame Prunier shaded her brow with her hand, and said, without looking up, “ I know of one place, but it is only that of bonne d’enfants—in other words, a sort of nurse.”

“ I will take it, Madame, for I want to stay in this country until I have mastered the language. I will take the situation of bonne d’enfants—it will be far less wounding to my pride than it would be to remain here as the object of your charity, good as you are.”

Madame Prunier extended her hand. “ You are a brave girl, a good girl,” she said, “ notwithstanding your foolish love affair. I respect you from my heart. Now listen to the programme of your place and its duties—Monsieur Valpin is an avocat, what we call a barrister ; he resides in this street, Numero 34, third étage ; he is rich ; his family consists of his wife and two children—a son of nine years and a daughter of seven—then he has

a coachman, for he keeps a carriage, and a garçon, who also acts in the house as an English housemaid would do, for he sweeps the floors, makes the beds, and cleans the fenders, and this coachman's wife is the cook. Now these Valpins want an English bonne to wash and dress their children, mend their clothes, conduct them to their different cours or lectures, talk English to them, and teach them to read it a little, and who will be regarded in the light of a servant. Yes, at first, until they come to appreciate you better. You see these French people do not understand a word of your language; then such numbers of ignorant English girls come over here to be hired as bonnes, that they get into the habit of classing them all under one head; then reflect that in their hearts the French regard us as a semi-barbarous people, and you will make some excuses for their conduct."

"It needs no excuse; I am perfectly willing for this Madame What's-her-name to look upon me as her servant if she likes."

"Still, you speak bitterly."

"No, I speak just as I please."

"And that is bitterly."

"No, why should I feel bitter towards this wife of a French avocat, who has been taught to regard the English as semi-barbarous, and who desires an English bonne for her children. She has a perfect right to both modes of thought and action."

"Anne—I call you Anne because I like you—Anne Cave, I hope you are not going to corrode into vinegar, and become a sour, cynical character."

"Suppose I do; and from that unamiable frame of mind I manage to extract a sort of dreary comfort, would you grudge it me? would you rather see me a meek, tender-hearted creature, weeping soft tears, and sim-

pering soft smiles? Madame Prunier, with bitterness comes strength; I shall be weak if I be not bitter."

"Be bitter then, to your heart's content, but don't be sour."

"Is there a difference?"

"Not much, perhaps, in your sense of the words; we talk of a person being embittered by the world, and soured by the world, and our idea is the same of both words; no, there is no difference."

"Then you uttered a paradox when you told me to be bitter but not to be sour."

"Don't talk of paradoxes, talk about the Valpins; they will give eight hundred francs, and I will go there with you to-morrow, and speak up for you, and stipulate that you shall take your meals alone or with the children. You could not eat with the servants."

"No, I am afraid that, unless I were excessively hungry, I should not be able to do that."

You see the old leaven of Pride sticks to me yet."

"No, Anne, that is self-respect not pride, and now go and smooth your hair, and put on another ribbon, for dinner is nearly ready."

* * * *

"This is it," said Madame Prunier, looking up at the figures marked over the general entrance, "this is Numero 34."

Madame Prunier's grey curls were brushed beautifully beneath her white straw bonnet. She wore a lilac muslin dress, and black silk cloak, and looked the personification of middle-aged respectability.

"Est-ce que Madame Valpin est chez elle?" inquired Madame of the Concierge.

A dirty ugly face of a man, with a shock head of hair, was thrust out of the window.

He answered briefly in the affirmative, and then they toiled up the stairs (oh, those interminable French stairs) to the third étage, where were two doors, one with a knocker and bell handle, but no name on it. The other with a small brass-plate, on which was engraved the words—"Monsieur Valpin, Avocat"—these were the two doors of Monsieur Valpin, the one leading to his private apartments, the other to his offices, and Madame Prunier pulled the bell-handle, and immediately the door was opened by a smiling red-haired man in livery. He was the coachman and footman combined of the Valpin household. The inward economy of some of these French bourgeoisie families is extraordinary. Well, this smiling functionary ushered them in, on their asking to see Madame Valpin, through the Valpin dining-room, which we will describe more anon, into the Valpin drawing-room, a perfect marvel of French taste and manners. There was the

usual polished oak floor, a bright rug of Persian make by the fire-place, sundry inlaid tables of Mosaic, priceless gems in the shape of Sévres ornaments and vases, superb clocks, curtains of scarlet satin, chairs cushioned with the same, and with the backs richly gilt, an exquisite little pianoforte in walnut case ; and, to crown the whole, Madame Valpin's bed, not hidden away in one corner, or wearing the modest guise of a wardrobe or the sofa by day, as some diffident English bedsteads similarly placed have been known at times to do, but standing boldly forward, a bed, and nothing but a bed ; but it was a very magnificent piece of furniture, the footboard was of walnut wood inlaid with mother of pearl, the curtains of mingled lace and rose coloured silk, the coverlet of rich rose satin, like unto the curtains ; and presently there entered Madame Valpin, or, as she was designated in the household, simply Madame.

Madame was dressed in a morning robe of

sky-blue cashmere, and a lace cap, with sky-blue ribbons. Madame's age might be thirty-five. She was a yellow-complexioned lady, with large, soft, dark eyes, thick long black hair, a long thin nose, and a mode of speaking through it in a sharp key. She smiled and advanced, and asked them to be seated, and Madamed Madame Prunier, and Mademoiselle Anne to her heart's content.

We need not go through the preliminaries ; suffice it to say Madame, knowing something of Madame Prunier, engaged Anne at the rate of eight hundred francs per annum, on her recommendation. She was to go the next day. Madame Prunier informed her that Anne had been *très bien élevée*, and stipulated therefore that she should be permitted to take her meals alone—to this after some slight demur Madame agreed, and then her future charges were summoned from some inner room and presented to her with all a mother's pride, a pair of thin, sallow, over-

dressed children, with delicate features, and dark almond-shaped eyes, they appeared extremely meek and gentle. Of this more hereafter.

Anne returned to the Hotel St. Eustache to pack up her clothes, and that evening she sallied forth with Mary to make a few purchases in the shape of cool morning dresses, for the summer had set in and threatened to be very hot. The next day about twelve o'clock she presented herself at Madame Valpin's door, and was again ushered into the presence of that lady and her *enfants charmants*. She was shown all over the limited compartment which owned the sway of the Valpins. First there was the chamber of the children, carpeted thickly with crimson, two pretty bedsteads, with scarlet damask curtains, basins and ewers of Bohemian glass, and all the appliances of comfort and luxury crammed into as small a space as possible. Then there was a pretty

dressing-room for Monsieur, and ditto for Madame. A kind of sleeping closet for Anne's humble self went out of the children's apartment, in which was an iron bedstead, a white jug and basin, and a square of looking-glass.

Then there was the dining-room, small, but filled with beautiful things; a kind of glass case, kept locked always, displayed hoards of silver teapots, cream jugs, dishes, and vases. Some fine paintings were on the walls, the chairs had seats of emerald velvet, and walnut-wood backs; a glossy table, also of walnut-wood, at which the Valpins dined, without a table-cloth, took up half the room. Then there was the diminutive French kitchen, with its cheerless cooking-stove and tiny window, looking out at nothing. Over this kitchen slept the coachman, and his wife, Estelle, the cook, a fat, morose, dark-skinned personage, with a name suggestive of moonlight on the flowery turf, and a shy and

lovely heroine of seventeen summers, rather than of a greasy matron of fifty and a cooking stove.

Well, Antoine, the coachman, and Estelle, the cook, did glide each night into the land of dreams, from this species of loft over the kitchen, into which they did climb by a step-ladder; and where at night did Pierre, the smiling, red-haired garçon, recline his weary limbs? and echo answers “where?” Anne never liked to ask, and we remain to this day in profound ignorance on the subject.

Anne’s pupils for English, her care by night and by day, Paul and Louise, she found very troublesome children; they were as mischievous as monkeys, as noisy as parrots, and as greedy as pigs. She had enough to do to wash and dress these rebellious imps, to prevent them from fighting with each other, to conduct them to their cours, and to mend their clothes in their absence.

Madame never gave her one cross word

the whole time she remained with her; but she looked in vain for the time to come when she should discover she was superior to the position she occupied in her family. We feel convinced that she never discovered it at all. Anne's life was not pleasant there; they were so cramped and confined for room, that she had no private place to retire to, even for an instant at night. Her sleeping closet was, of course, left open, since it had neither window nor fire-place, and she could not even write a letter unwatched and untormented by the children.

True, she had few letters to write—one occasionally to her mother, and now and then a line or two to Mary Prunier, comprised the whole of her correspondence. Her sole recreation and relief consisted in those occasional visits to the Hotel St. Eustache that she paid whenever she had a holiday; of these there was no lack.

Monsieur and Madame had a little country

house at St. Cloud, and thither they would occasionally go for a day, taking their children with them, and leaving Anne at liberty to go whithersoever she pleased.

Ah, me, that long, hot, burning summer, with its scorching paving-stones, and stifling atmosphere; the days she spent in stitching away at the socks, and cutting out the pin-fores of Paul and Louise, they were dreary days, duty—duty. She tried to be satisfied as she sat stitching in the red-carpeted bedroom of the young Valpins; she told herself that she had food, and raiment, and shelter, and even some money, besides that she had youth and health, and yet with it all she was wretched.

She had little time for reading, but still she managed to study French daily at intervals, by means of a grammar and pocket dictionary. No other language ever passed her lips, except when she visited the Pruniers—she felt she was getting on surprisingly. Her

meals she took alone, still in the children's bedroom, where Pierre, the garçon, brought her her bowl of chocolate in the morning, an omelette, and vin ordinaire, with fruit of some kind at twelve o'clock, and her dinner of ragout or rotie, garnished with confiture, fruit, and fromage from the Valpins' table at six o'clock. They looked on her as too much beneath them to invite her to their dinner, and it was surprising to her that Antoine and Estelle did not resent her refusal to join them at dinner; far from it, they always had a pleasant word for Mademoiselle l'institutrice, as they called her by courtesy.

She did not find the insular ideas respecting the distaste for home, supposed to be felt by the French, verified in this family. They had literally no acquaintance excepting their relatives, a married sister of Monsieur and her husband. These people used to come once or twice a week to dine with the Valpins, and the Valpins used to go to their house in the

Boulevard des Capuchins also once or twice a week. Madame rarely stirred beyond the precincts of her narrow but richly furnished house. The sums these people spent on the dresses of themselves and their children were enormous. Madame's velvet dresses alone were worth a small fortune. Once Anne saw a mauve coloured Genoa velvet, with rich gold frosted buttons, the size of half-crowns, down the front—the cost of this dress was two thousand francs—her ornaments and her diamonds were as rich as those of a Duchess. Monsieur, the money spinner for this little hive, was a handsome man. He was fair with a Frenchman's fairness, that is to say, he was pale, and had pale blue eyes—he was always awfully polite to Anne, never passing or repassing without a bow and a “pardon, Mademoiselle.”

One warm evening at the beginning of September, when the Valpins had gone to St. Cloud, Anne put on her bonnet and crossed

the Rue Mont Martre, and soon she had climbed the stairs leading to the Hotel St. Eustache and was seated in the dining-room. Dinner was over, but the boarders, of whom there were several, were cheerfully chatting away in their different languages—there were Russians bearded and fierce—Italians voluble and dark—Germans serious and reserved; a sprinkling of Englishmen and English ladies, Madame Prunier reigning supreme as she always did, and Mary enjoying a *tête-à-tête* with Alolph Kurtz. Anne remained in this room about an hour, and formed an acquaintance with a pleasant-faced English widow, a Mrs. Somers, who had brought her little girl to France to place her at school. Somehow it came out in conversation that she had a slight acquaintance with the Aubreys. Her husband had been a surgeon, and had been called in to attend on Lady Jane after her marriage with Robert Aubrey. She told Anne that Robert had at first taken a house in a quiet

street at the west end, and that immediately after her marriage the bride had been attacked by a severe fever. When Mrs. Somers learnt that Anne had been governess in the family of Mr. Aubrey's mother, she became more confidential, and she made the girl's heart beat fast and thick when she told her that there could not possibly be a more wretched couple than Robert and his idol Jane.

"Does she not love him then?" she asked, flatteringly.

"It is he who has conceived a most violent dislike to her."

"Impossible," Anne exclaimed, suddenly, and so loudly that she made her informant start. "He used to idolize her."

"Well," said Mrs. Somers, who was a gossipping, confidential kind of body, "all I know is that I was told by my poor dear husband, who has only been dead six weeks," and here the bereaved widow had recourse to a very

fine cambric embroidered handkerchief. Anne's thoughts rushed back to the spring evening sixteen months past, when, seated in the twilight school room at Yanly Manor, Robert and she had conversed on the durability or indurability of human attachments. "Look at the loving husbands and devoted wives that are to be met with always, Mr. Aubrey," she had said. "Is their attachment to weigh for nothing in your theory?"

"Tell me," he had answered, "when it happens that one or other of these people is removed by death, how long it is before the survivor takes comfort and another partner?"

Oh, Robert, Robert, of the passionate heart and fiery language! Oh, meek-eyed widow, with the becoming weeds, and the broidered handkerchief, to wipe away interesting tears. Oh, world, world! Oh, weary, longing, yearning, desolate-hearted Anne.

“ Soon after the recovery of Lady Jane,” said Mrs. Somers, “ Mr. Aubrey was attacked by a terrible nervous fever, and my dear husband” (broidered handkerchief again) “was his constant attendant. Somehow or other, dear Charles had a way of making friends and inviting confidence. Mr. Aubrey conceived quite a liking for him, and it was he alone that he could bear to converse with. Lady Jane’s step or voice seemed to increase the nervous irritation of the patient; if she approached his bedside, Mr. Aubrey would drive her away with snappish words, and one day he confessed—actually confessed ! to my husband—that he mortally hated his wife !”

“ And your husband communicated this to you ?”

“ Yes ; poor dear Charles had no concealments from me,” (broidered handkerchief again).

“ And where are they now ?”

"Mr. Aubrey and Lady Jane are in Paris, I believe, now."

Anne had lost sight of Elsie and Miss Late for the last two months, since Mrs. Aubrey had removed her establishment into Normandie, during the summer months, so all this was complete news to her.

"Miss Cave," said Madame Prunier, "will you come into my room and look at a beautiful bouquet I yesterday received from the country."

She bowed to Mrs. Somers, and then followed Madame Prunier to her chamber, where she smelt indeed at the bouquet, and admired the flowers, but she knew well that the ostensible reason that Madame wanted her for was to inquire how she was getting on. She began to tell her at once.

"I have plenty to do, Madame; and if it be true that 'Industry comprises happiness, and duty is delight,' then am I wrapped in a

mantle of delights, and my whole life is one continued pleasure."

"Bitter, still," said Madame Prunier, shaking her head, "bitter still, and at war with the world generally. Anne Cave, I am sorry for you."

"Are you, Madame?"

"Yes, I am; you are in a tangled wood, now, and it is dark, and you cannot see your way out; but have courage, faith, and patience; one day a light shall suddenly shine before you, and shall light you safely out of the difficult, tedious, cheerless path you are treading."

"Oh, Madame! would that that light would shine upon me—the whole world is henceforth to me but one dreary, dark, thorn-encompassed road—the light that guides me out of it must be light from Heaven, and it must lead me safely from this 'dark wood,' as you call it—but one cold stream must be

passed through first, Madame Prunier—the stream of death."

"Strange, romantic, weak girl," said Madame Prunier.

"Yes, Madame, I am all that, and worse; besides, I do wish I was dead."

"Have you ever looked upon death, child?" asked Madame, with a slight shudder.

"No, never."

"Then wait until you do, before you long for anything so terrible. You know Byron writes :

"'The first dark day of nothingness,'

In those lines beginning :

"'He who hath bent him o'er the dead,
Ere the first day of death had fled;

And then comes the line I have quoted."

"And what of it, Madame?"

“Why, is there not something appalling in that nothingness—that inanition!”

“Was not Byron an infidel, Madame?”

“I know not,” answered Madame Prunier, gloomily, for she liked not these subjects. “I know not; but to hear a young woman—sensible, in health, and who can earn her living with her own right hand, whining and longing for death, is to me—”

“Stop, Madame, let no harsh word, that you cannot recal, pass your kindly lips—let us talk of something else.”

Anne returned soon after to the dining-room, to partake of fruit and coffee, and went back to the Valpins rather more cheerful.

CHAPTER VIII.

WINTER came in—the winter of Paris; bitterly cold is that winter for the most part. We have no cold in England to compare to the severity of the climate in the French capital ; and then the rooms at the Valpins were uncheered by anything but the miserable, ill-fed stoves.

Oh ! how Anne suffered, working with numb hands, and her feet aching with cold, that bitter weather. Madame seemed brisker than ever ; the French are desperately hardy in some things.

Madame would rise, swallow her chocolate prepared in the kitchen, bustle about with Antoine, give Anne quantities of things to repair ; order the dinner—in short, employ herself for at least an hour and a half, and all without a fire. Then she would call out, “Antoine, bring some wood, and light the stove in the salon.” To go to this stove with her helpless suffering hands, and ask permission to warm them, was Anne’s first care.

“ You are cold, Mademoiselle,” Madame would say sweetly.

“ Madame, I am half-frozen.”

“ You have not a good circulation, *mon enfant*,” Madame would answer kindly. “ I pity you.”

These may seem trifles to dwell on, but we assure the reader that with the cold the girl suffered during that time was terrible. She sometimes wondered that it did not strike to her heart and kill her. The Valpin children

were as impervious to the climate as their mother. Anne often thought of laying in a load of wood and a stove at her own expense. Madame had the effrontery to tell her that she would get accustomed to all this in time. Christmas was passed by with all the neglect which the French manifest towards our national festival, but towards the jour de l'an the little Valpins became rampant with mischief and glee; they had a week's holiday, and Anne led them through the Boulevards to assist them in purchasing toys and sweet-meats from the little booths. The crowd, the snow which was falling, the noise confused her sadly, when she saw a face wild with anguish among the gay crowd—a face she knew. It was that of Harvey Aubrey.

And his eye caught hers, and he rushed up to her, and seized her hand, and tried to speak, but words failed him; there were no tears in his eyes, there was worse, there was a look of blank despair that it froze Anne's

blood to gaze upon. She stood in voiceless horror by his side, unable to ask a question, and with a feeling like death at her heart. With the noise of crowds around them, with the white mantle of winter falling upon them, there, in the land of the stranger, in the great foreign city, stood they both, the old man and the young woman, bound together by one strong tie, for they both had loved her well, and they both were overwhelmed at her loss. At length the squire was enabled to tell the sad tidings that conveyed to Anne the appalling fact, that Elsie, the spirited, noble, loving Elsie, was gone, was dead. Then rushed in upon her memories on memories of times when she might have been kinder, gentler, tenderer, to the lost one. Why had she left her—oh! why, why? and even her last little letter written before she left Paris Anne had never answered, thinking, poor, short-sighted mortal, that she should soon see her again, feeling too low-spirited to write to

her, and telling herself that she had no time. The tale, as she afterwards learnt it, of her second attack of brain fever when in Normandie ; of her recovery, which left her weak and nervous, and delicate ; of her desire to see her father ; of their writing for him ; of his coming at once ; of their return to Paris ; of the attendance of Doctor Gomazzio, returned lately from Italy, on the child ; of the attack of brain fever, which had prostrated her for the last three weeks ; and of her death the day before in Mr. Aubrey's arms. The tale, as Anne afterwards heard it, she did not comprehend then. She could only say wildly, “Why did you not send for me ? Oh, why did you not send for me ?”

“Elsie had lost your address, and Miss Late, the governess did not know it. She asked for you again and again, my dear. My dear, why did you leave my poor little girl ? She has been too hard worked by her new

governess and Mrs. Aubrey. Oh, my little love—oh, my little comfort—my darling of my old age, are you gone?"

Tears came now fast and thick to the old man's eyes.

Anne stood cold and unmoved as a stone, the fountain of her tears seemed dried up, and her grief felt heavy at her heart. With it all there struggled through her soul that strange feeling of disbelief in the death of the one she loved, which most of us have alas experienced, that vague—

"She'll come again," that we whisper unconsciously to ourselves in the first days of our bereavement.

"You must come and take a last look at her," said Harvey Aubrey. "You must come to-night. To-morrow her little coffin will be soldered up and packed into a leaden case. I am going to take it back with me to Yanly; there she shall rest with her fore-

fathers, with many and many an Aubrey in our quiet church. But you must come to-night—you must come to-night."

Anne grasped his hand without speaking, and then calling to the little Valpins, she retraced her steps to the Rue Mont Martre; she hardly knew how she passed that day.

Madame respected her grief, and called the children from her, and left her to mourn in silence and solitude.

"Je te plains sincerenement, mon enfant," she said, kindly.

That evening Anne stole forth into the white, brilliant, busy, ice-cold streets. Madame sent Antoine to escort her. She walked with lowered head, and with still that vague "She'll come again," stirring within her. Oh, she could not be dead! the merry, sprightly, saucy, fond, unselfish, loving Elsie could not be dead. *Never!* was not a word to associate with her idea; she might be ill,

very ill—perhaps dying, but not dead—oh, not dead !

“ Numéro vingt-huit Rue Taitbout.”

“ C'est ici, Mademoiselle,” said Antoine, standing back in the snowy street, and looking up at the figures.

With a shudder Anne entered.

Antoine went into the concierge. Anne mounted the stairs—one, two, second étage ; a light burns in the passage—a bright light, but flickering about in the January wind a little. The door looked as it had looked of old. Often had she stood there with Elsie, and *she* had *pulled* that bell.

Oh, is this not some frightful delusion ? if she pulls that handle, shall she not hear her hurrying light footsteps and her glad young voice ? She pulls it tremblingly—nervously—it sounds feebly—faintly, but it is opened instantly by Christine ; she is weeping. Anne enters silently. She follows Christine into

the salon—that salon where she used to give her lessons ; the stove is heated fiercely, and the door of it is open, and Harvey Aubrey is before it warming his poor chilled hands ; he sees Anne, and without a word he seizes a lamp and she follows him through the little sitting room where Mrs. Aubrey and Sophy are sobbing on the sofa, into her room—the room where she had been ill, and she had nursed her.

Extended on three chairs is a shape Anne knows too well, covered by a white sheet. Christine takes it off ; there is the awful-looking black box, long and narrow. Harvey Aubrey signs to Christine. She takes off the heavy lid ; he raises the lamp and its light streams down on what Anne had never looked on—death—before ; she gazed now for a moment steadily.

“ Oh, God ! is that all that is left of Elsie, my Elsie, that I have loved, that I have romped with, that I have taught, that I have

talked to, that has talked to me so sweetly?" There, with the close white cap, and with the brown hair cut short, lies the still head on the raised white pillow; and the face, the altered, sad, fixed face, the blue eyes glazed and half-closed; the dreadful change, the wax-like, pallid hand, the strange smile on the parted lips!

"Oh, Elsie, Elsie! gone for ever! this is not my Elsie," exclaimed Anne, falling on her knees by the side of the dead; "this is not Elsie. Oh, that she could speak to me, if only once, to say she forgave my desertion, my neglect, my often unkindness. Oh, Elsie, Elsie, my little love, why did I leave you? why? why?"

"Consider what she is spared—what agonies of love, and hate, and fear, and danger, and what disappointments, cruel as the grave itself; there she lies, calm and peaceful, and there shall she lie till the time when the graves shall be opened, and the sea shall

give up its dead. Oh, Anne, would that I lay there in her place. ‘Weep not for the dead, but for the living and suffering.’”

Anne looked up ; she knew well the mellow tones of the voice which had spoken. It was Robert Aubrey, who stood before her ; pale, and gaunt, and ill he looked, and his suit of deep mourning gave yet greater pallor to his cheek. Then she could look at him without one throe of the old feeling, without one thought of the love she had borne him. Pity, deep pity for his suffering, whatever it might be, was the only feeling that possessed her. He envied the dead—he envied Elsie ; he must be in deep grief, but she did not answer him—she could not—her heart was breaking at the loss of Elsie ; for the time he weighed but lightly in her thoughts, and she turned away and wept bitterly ; then he approached her closely, and he whispered in her ear :

“Anne, I behaved like a demon to you !
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Believe this—you are fully avenged! Oh, did you know all—more than avenged.” Then, without waiting for an answer, he walked out.

Anne would not take another look at the white, still face of her darling; she strove hard to picture her to herself, rosy and sprightly as she had seen her at Yanly, with her tangled brown locks and mud-covered shoes. Oh, let her forget the waxen figure in that long black box. “Oh, Elsie, Elsie, come to me in dreams, come as of yore, with the bright smile you wore in dear green England, when you used to chase the butterflies over the lawn at Yanly. Elsie, my Elsie, farewell, but not for ever! oh, not for ever!” She half uttered these last words aloud.

Christine, who had replaced the lid, approached Anne, and signed to her to withdraw. Mr. Harvey Aubrey followed them to the little parlour. They found Gomazzio, Mrs. Aubrey, and Sophy; they all rose and

shook hands with Anne kindly. Wine and spiced cake was on the table, of which they begged her to partake.

Mrs. Aubrey addressed her in English :

“ Miss Cave, you have quite deserted us. Are you comfortable where you are now ?”

“ Madame, comfort is not the word ; I suffer much with cold in the Rue Mont Martre ; they keep no fires ; but Madame Valpin is a kind woman in her way.”

“ I wish you would come and live with us again,” said the squire feebly, “ I do, indeed ; my health is sadly broken ; I have had an attack of paralysis, and I am obliged to trust most of my affairs to an agent. I have been robbed in the spring of two thousand pounds, and in fact I have been quite upset. When the funeral is over,” dropping his voice, “ I intend to return to France, it suits my health better, and if you would live with us, and write my letters, and read those that come, and read the papers to me, you would be an

immense comfort to me, you would indeed, and I would give you thirty-five pounds a year."

"Indeed, Miss Cave," said Mrs. Aubrey, "I wish you would; Mr. Aubrey is a great invalid and I am much engaged, and as he says you would be an immense comfort; and all cause of annoyance," she added, presently, "for you, at least, is over."

Anne supposed that she meant as Robert was married it would be now a peaceful, painless life for her there with them. She looked up at her splendid countenance that she might see its expression. The whole plot of her life it seemed to her was upset; she could not now hope for one instant to see George the owner of Yanly, for not only was Robert married, but in daily expectation of an heir. Yet she did not look daunted; the old expression was still in the blue eyes; the old determination sat still on the finely carved mouth. Anne remembered her words in the

inn bed-room at Felton, when speaking of Robert and his inheritance—"If his life, or twenty lives lay between you and the Yanly Estates, I would sacrifice them all."

Lady Jane, Anne heard, was in London, and she thought that after all perhaps Mrs. Aubrey's violence was more in words than in deeds.

George was now completely cut out from any share in the estate, and plot as she would, unless she committed murder, Anne did not see that she could do any thing; and she was far too wise and too polite for any such extreme and brutal measure.

"You must come, won't you?" said Harvey Aubrey, at length appealing to Anne.

"Yes, sir, gladly, willingly," she said eagerly.

"Come next week," said Mrs. Aubrey, "you do not require to give more than a week's notice to those people, do you?"

"No, Madam."

Anne now rose to go, when there entered Miss Late. She flew to Anne and embraced her in weeping. She had never loved Elsie much, but she was shocked and affected at her death. Whilst this lady was speaking Robert came in; he drew a chair to the fire and sat down, then he buried his face gloomily in his hands, and remained without speaking.

Anne began to take her leave; she shook hands with Mrs. Aubrey, with the weeping Sophy, with the silent grave Italian, with the talkative Miss Late, with the heart-broken squire, and she promised to come there that day week; then she approached Robert—

“Good night, Mr. Aubrey.”

He rose and pushed his chair back.

“I am coming with you.”

“Thank you, I have a servant with me.”

“You have? Well, let me light you to the door?”

He seized a light, and preceded her through

the large salon and to the outer door; then he paused—

“ You will not let me walk back with You? You are right, I do not deserve it. I am going home to Yanly,” he continued, “ with my father, to see her buried, and to order a monument to her memory. She was my favourite, and I have chosen the inscription myself. He drew a paper from his pocket, and handed it to Anne to read :

Sacred
To the Memory of
ELSIE, (youngest daughter of **HARVEY AUBREY, Esq.,**
of Yanly Manor, in this parish.)
She died December 31st, 1818, aged 14 years.

—
“ Let not your heart be troubled.”—John xiv., 1.

“ No other verse?” said Anne, returning the paper.

“ No other verse,” he answered. “ Those are just the words the sweet child would speak, could she see our grief now—my

father's, and mine, and yours ; she would tell us not to grieve on her account."

"Good night," said Anne, extending her hand.

"Good night," he returned, taking it in his own. "Good night." He opened the door, and she hurried down the stairs to the lodge of the *concierge*, and Antoine conducted her home. She told Madame Valpin that she must leave her, and loud were her regrets; even the children, the rude children, cried when they heard of her intention to go away; they were all good to her, during that week. There in those foreign rooms, with those foreigners about her, she lost all thought of the world around her—her thoughts followed the father and son on their melancholy journey, and the little encased coffin. She thought of the long frosty roads that must be traversed, Paris, and the sea, of the vessel, and the box being carried on board, and stowed in a cabin by itself, of the tossing

waters, of the channel, and then of the landing on native shores ; again of the long, cold journey, with post-horses, and still with that dreadful box before them, that the Aubreys, father and son, must take before Yanly could be reached ; of the halting at inns, of the country people's curiosity, of the approach to their own county, and, finally, of their entering Yanly—sweet, peaceful Yanly—of the little church, and the *one* night when the coffin must rest there alone, all in the winter cold and silence, when the spirit-like moonlight would steal in at the painted window of the altar, and bathe the railings and the stone steps, and the tablets of the dead, in its silvery, mist-like brightness, and when it would creep round and throw a gleam over the coffin itself, and its black pall, and perchance shine into the empty Aubrey pew ; then the breaking of the winter morning, the rising of the sun, the coming of the day, and the sad group of mourners—father, son, and servants

from the Manor, their black dresses, their standing round the open grave, and Charles Higham reading out those solemn, solemn words, "I am the resurrection and the life." She could see the old man's convulsive weeping, and Robert's pale, stern grief ; she could see the coffin lowered, lowered, and then she could hear the cruel sound of the sods falling in upon it, and then the walking heavily away of the mourners.

"Oh, Elsie, Elsie, never, never more shall I see you again—never, in this living, breathing world of ours—never by winter fireside shall your voice be heard, never in summer fields or country roadway, never in city streets or in the lively household. Please God a time may come when I shall see you with your bright angel's crown and robes of white ; but here, in this mortal world—the only world of which I know anything—I shall never see you more, never hear that wilful, cheerful voice, and never see that rosy child's face. Cold,

cold, and still, is that once warm, breathing, beating heart, silent for ever that chattering tongue. Oh, Elsie, my heart is breaking, for I shall never see you more, never, never."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET.

BACK in the Rue Taitbout, back with the Aubreys, dressed in her suit of mourning, writing the squire's letters, reading him the papers, more comfortable, so far as creature comforts go, than she had ever been, for she occupies poor Elsie's warm, comfortable apartment, and her duties are light, in fact, a mere nothing. She mourns more each day for the lost one; the father and herself mingle their tears together. The ladies still do a round of visiting; from them Anne hears no

further allusion to the past than an occasional regret that every bit of dust will stick to black clothes so dreadfully. At last Mrs. Aubrey accepted an invitation from Madame de Villiers, and she and Sophy went off to Versailles for a month, taking Christine with them, and Anne was left with the old man alone. One night she had retired to bed earlier than usual, and she was seated reading by the fire, in the little sitting room, when the outer bell rang, and to her astonishment Jules ushered in Robert Aubrey, whom she had believed to be in London ; he was strangely pale, and his eyes were strangely bright.

In answer to Jules' polite inquiry that Monsieur would eat something, Robert answered angrily, "No, no, go away ; I tell you I want nothing."

When they were alone, he approached Anne closely, and looking earnestly into her

eyes, he said, in a thick voice, "Anne, Anne, the demon is come."

"What do you mean?" she cried, quite alarmed at his manner, and she sprang to her feet.

"Sit down," he said, coaxingly, "don't be frightened, sit down."

So she sat down. Robert unbuttoned his overcoat, and leaned back in his chair.

"I have seen your dark eyes as I rode along. I have seen them in the hurrying, bright night clouds, in the very sparks which struck out from my horse's feet, your bright, beautiful, sad eyes. Anne, I have come to France to be near you. I will stay where *you* are."

"You have been drinking," said Anne, coldly, "or you would not take advantage of my unprotected condition to insult me."

"To insult you; can you speak so coldly and so scornfully? where is all that love you

once bore me ? is it quite gone ? Oh, Anne, I married, as I thought, a creature divine and goddess-like ; I found that I was mated with a senseless, painted doll, without heart, and without soul, and without mind. One who could dress well, and look well, but who could not feel, or think, or even talk. She wanted to make a great match. She thinks of my great expectations, but she is a selfish fool, and I hate her."

"I must not hear this," Anne said, rising, "choose some other confidante, not me."

"I choose you, because I love you, madly, deeply, desperately."

Anne's lip curled.

" You disbelieve, you despise me ; you do right, and I should never step out of the line of reticence which I have laid down for myself, but that the demon has come, it has laid its hellish hands on me, and I am mad."

" Mad ?" she echoed his words wildly.

" Yes, mad ! Now you know what my

step-mother has been aiming at; she knew the seeds of this were in my brain; she knew that my blood ran always like lava in my veins; it is the curse of my house, I tell you—the house of the Haughtons—and well has she marked me for the one on whom this curse would fall. Oh, I have striven to be very mild, and meek, and patient, but now I feel the hour is come. She will not shut me up in a mad-house, because I shall soon have an heir; but I shall not live long. My uncle was attacked just in this way at my age; he died raving mad in six months, so shall I!"

He sprang towards Anne as he spoke, and held her powerless in a vice-like grasp—

"I love you," he said fiercely, and with clenched teeth. "I love you. I never loved you until I began to hate Jane, then I loved the pale, slight, spiritual, beautiful creature, with the noble mind, and loving, generous heart; then I learned what a treasure I had

cast to the winds. It is not because I am mad that I love you ; I worshipped you when you knelt by Elsie's coffin, and I was not mad then. Now you dread me, you tremble like a leaf in my arms ; you are too pure to love me now, or to show that you do, because I am married. May I have one, one kiss ? I could take it now with ease, if I willed it, for the fair, small cheek is turned towards me ; but I will not, if you forbid me."

"I forbid you," she said, firmly.

He released his grasp of her.

"I worship you, not with the slavish passion I felt for Jane, but with my spirit, my soul, my whole being, and my heart's most wild yet most pure devotion. Think of that, and say are you not avenged ? Have you not a knife ?" he added, hurriedly. "A sharp one, that will cut deep, and swiftly ?"

"I will go and bring you one," said Anne, and she left the room ; but she put on a cloak and run out into the street, crossed into the

Boulevard, and was not long in presenting herself before Doctor Gomazzio, who she found fortunately at home. She told him of Robert's state, and she asked his advice.

"You take too much interest, Mademoiselle," said he, with a dark frown, "in this man."

"What would you have me do, Monsieur ? Should I leave a man in his state to play with knives, and to injure himself?"

"Himself! he is still your first thought—it is you he would have injured—you he would have stabbed."

"Then Monsieur refuses to come?"

"I have not said so."

And the Doctor drew on his cloak, put on a broad leafed felt hat, and followed Anne down stairs. When they reached the Rue Taitbout, he shut her in the salon, and proceeded to the little room; presently he came to her.

"He is not mad," he said, "but he has an

excitable brain ; he is oppressed with cold and fever, and is very ill. I have put him to bed in Mrs. Aubrey's room ; send Annette and Justine to him now, and to-morrow I will send you a good garde malade. Have no fear, your friend is not mad."

For days Robert lay tossing on that bed of fever, his steps drew nigh unto the grave, and he was brought almost to the dust of death. The garde malade, a morose old French woman, arrived, in brown dress, white cap and apron, and small brown face. She attended considerately to the doctor's orders, and assisted by Annette, and occasionally by Anne, she well discharged her duties.

Harvey Aubrey, this very time, took to his bed, being attacked by paralysis, and thus the once gay appartement in the Rue Taitbout became a hospital, trod only by the careful slippers of attendants on the sick. Anne nursed both ; she divided her time between the patients, and her own foot-

steps began to falter and her cheek to pale, but she worked on still. She wrote daily bulletins to Mrs. Aubrey, who remained still at Versailles, for she said that her own health was too precarious to allow of her being useful ; and she would not suffer Sophy to enter a house tainted with fever.

It was fortunate that Gomazzio, the nurse, and Annette were wholly ignorant of English, for Robert's ravings were, at times, fearful. He did not know Anne, but his whole thoughts seemed to turn in her direction.

" I did not love her, I only pitied her," he said, one evening. " Pity, pity for the sweet, young face, and something tenderer than pity, when I looked into the mournful, dark eyes, were all I felt. My love was wasted on a senseless piece of Eve's flesh, who was soulless, mindless, heartless ; and I turned round, villain that I was, and told her I must leave her. She scorned me, then, with a beautiful, passionate scorn, that touched me

to the quick, and awoke a new, undreamt of feeling within me. I would have taken her hand, her fair, slight hand, but she waived me off; and she stood erect before me, her slender, fragile form trembling with excess of feeling, while her soul looked at me through those brown eyes. Then, then, I first had an idea of the something that made her precious, invaluable, necessary to me. Had our souls met and loved in another state of existence? Had hers, with perceptions finer than my own, discovered our affinity at once, and yearned to join with mine again? And now, now, when too late, had I awakened to the full consciousness of this, only to my misery and regret? Oh! for one touch of her hand, one smile from her lip, I would barter my existence. And I am married forsooth—married to one in regard to whom it hath pleased God to give me the strong delusion that I should believe a lie, for I dreamt that I loved Jane Vaughan, until she became my wife;" a

strong expression of abhorrence passed over his whitened face at the last words, and he shuddered visibly.

"He is mad," said Anne, inwardly. "This is, indeed, the terrible secret of his life. He is mad! Oh, my Father, in Heaven, look down on this stricken one, and raise him up again. Let not the wicked triumph over him. I have loved him well, I love him now; but remove from him this fearful impression, take away the curse, and restore him in love, and in happiness, and health, to his wife, and to his senses."

Thus she prayed, without weeping, without demonstration, but sincerely, God knows, and from the depths of her sorrowful heart.

That night, by Harvey Aubrey's bedside, she read the 14th of St. John's Gospel aloud to the poor, old sufferer. He listened eagerly to those words of love. When she had finished, he motioned her, feebly, to give him

his draught. She did so ; then he lay back on his pillow.

“ My dear,” said he, “ I have made a great mistake all through my life. I have set my affections on things which were passing away. At first I studied botany and natural history, then I set all my love on a woman, then, my dear, I am rather afraid I became too fond of money, too careful—” He paused, then added: “ My dear, to-morrow I mean to alter my will. I mean to provide for you comfortably. You have been to me as a daughter, and Elsie loved you, henceforth you shall be above want. Now go and lie down in your room. God bless you !”

“ God bless you, sir, God bless my kind old friend.”

She kissed the feeble, nerveless, withered hand, and she went and lay down, dressed as she was. She slept long and deeply ; dreamless was that slumber. When she awoke from it the winter morning had broken ;

Gomazzio, Annette, and the garde malade stood round her bed, with white scared faces. In the night the immortal soul of the old man had passed into eternity, and the fever-wracked patient, in the next room, was now the owner of Yanly Manor.

CHAPTER X.

THE DOCTORS.

MR. AUBREY left no will; but Mrs. Aubrey came to Paris at once, and, calmly and firmly, gave her orders. A coffin and leaden case were obtained. The poor, withered remains were packed up to be sent home for interment. George and Ernest were to meet them in London, and convey them to Yanly, there to be buried in the family vault. Mrs. Aubrey went in to see Robert, who was now recovering slowly. He knew her at once, and, as his

father's death was kept from him, he was surprised at her presence.

"Are you come to nurse me, Madam?" he demanded, with a touch of his old irony.

"No, Robert; you appear well cared for," glancing at Anne. "I am only here until to-morrow. To-night your poor father's body is to go off."

Had she reckoned on the sudden news, so heart rending, so exciting, driving the sufferer back into those wild regions of fever and horror from which he was slowly emerging? We believe it. A terrible expression crossed Gomazzio's face, who stood close to her, but he mastered his emotion, and handed Robert, who was deathly white, a glass of cooling sherbet. He drained it to the last drop, then handed it to Anne to replace.

Mrs. Aubrey, who had spoken French as was her wont, now, spoke English to Robert.

"I have a letter for you; it arrived this

morning ;” and she drew forth a letter, edged and sealed with black. “ It has the London post mark. Shall I read it to you, or will you ?”

“ Madame,” said the Italian, fiercely, snatching at it, “ do you really wish to kill your step-son ?”

“ Monsieur, give it me,” said Robert, quietly. “ You miscalculate my strength—suspense is worse than despair.”

But Gomazzio had put it into his own pocket. Robert lay back on his pillow.

“ That letter is for me. It is edged with black, consequently I know that another death has occurred in our family. This suspense is worse than certainty. Do you wish to kill me, Doctor Gomazzio ?”

“ You are not in a fit state to receive a letter at all.”

“ Will it injure me more than lying here surmising ?”

The Doctor felt his pulse and his temples,

from which nearly all the bright hair had been cut away.

"You have, after all, no fever about you," said Gomazzio. "You may read your letter, or let some one read it to you."

"Let it be Miss Cave," said Robert, while a smile flitted across his pale countenance. "Miss Cave, I am anxious. Break that seal, and read quickly."

Anne looked with surprise at his quiet face, he who, three days ago, had been like a raving, fevered lunatic. Would a terrible storm follow on this strange calm? She broke the seal, she read the first words; they were written by a stranger, who tried to break the news gently to the husband. Jane, Lady Jane, was dead; she had died in giving birth to a still-born son. The letters swam before Anne's eyes, and her heart beat suffocatingly. She glanced up at the suffering Robert; she saw a face sad and agonised,

but it was not the agony of despair, but rather of self reproach, that sat there.

“Leave me, all of you,” he then said to his step-mother, who stood by in rustling black silk; and with a very pale, eager, fiendish face, it seemed to Anne, he added—“Madam, I, so weak, and feeble, and shattered, I am the only barrier now between you and your desires, but leave me all of you at once.”

Anne rushed from the room; Mrs. Aubrey slowly followed; Gomazzio remained behind some time. Of course Robert was not left alone; the garde malade was sent to him. But Anne carefully avoided his chamber, after the reading of his black-edged letter; events had followed on one after the other so quickly, that she scarcely felt the surprise she might have been expected to feel at the death of her proud, beautiful, and high-born rival. Jane was dead! poor lady! what was the mystery of her wedded life? Why had her adorer become her enemy? Was it possible

that such burning love could be turned to hatred? must there not be some truth in his assertion that he was mad?

That night the remains of Harvey Aubrey were sent off under careful escort. For a whole week Anne saw nothing of Robert, but she heard of his gradual recovery from Gomazzio, of his calmness and self-possession. She did not attach the least importance to the ravings on his bed of fever. She never suffered herself to hope that she could be anything to Robert Aubrey. She told herself that her heart and affections were dead, and she even began to think of looking out for another situation; at the same time she made herself useful to Mrs. Aubrey, and she never alluded to her leaving her; she was kind to her at this time.

Sophy came home; in another week George and his wife arrived in the Rue Taitbout. Anne was again turned out of her sleeping-room, and forced to ascend to the cold garret.

George looked, she thought, paler and more anxious than she had ever seen him; his wife treated her with all her old scorn, she became positively insulting.

One morning, as Anne sat in Mrs. Aubrey's room, trimming a dress with new crape, Madame George, as she was called, entered, and holding out her foot, she said, in feeble English, which she had learned during her six months' residence in London :—

“Come you to fasten quick my boots.”

Affecting not to comprehend her orders, Anne continued her work.

Then, stamping her foot, the lady repeated her orders imperiously in French, though she now called Anne mademoiselle.

“Madame, I do not choose to fasten your boots,” said Anne, quietly.

“Ha, ha, ha,” laughed Madame George, “it is fine for you to be impertinent. I know all about you, girl, and I know your base designs on that madman.”

And she pointed in the direction of Robert's door.

Anne was in a terrible rage with the fair, graceful, haughty little Frenchwoman, and she lost her self command as she answered—

“Had he married you, you would not call him ‘mad man!’ ”

Marie's blue eyes shot gleams of fierce wrath in Anne's direction.

At the time of the old regime, and before the revolution had shattered dynasties and made the power of the people to be felt, at the time when the race, to which Madame George belonged were in excess of pampered power and pride, had they both lived at that time, and had those words of anger been spoken, then, in the Rue Taitbout, in the city of Paris, the dependent would not then have defied the daughter of the de Villiers with impunity. The Bastile has often closed on an offender for a less fault. These thoughts were in the

brains of the Frenchwoman, for she exclaimed :

“ Canaille ! Had you lived thirty years since, you had not dared to insult us ; but now things are changed.”

“ Who calls Anne Cave canaille ?” said a voice, and Robert, pale and gaunt, and wrapped in a dressing gown of dark flowered crimson, stood before them. “ Madame, you must not, you shall not insult that young lady ;” and he pointed to Anne. “ I mean, in decent time, if she will condescend to accept me, to make her my wife. The future Lady of the Manor is worthy, at least, of civility from the wife of the younger brother ;” his hollow cheek was flooded, as he spoke, with the rich blood, and the slender lip and fine nostril quivered with excess of passion.

Madame George looked scared for a moment, then turned and fled from the room. And Robert dropped on his knees before

Anne, and spoke words of love, such as he had never spoken to her before. His heart was poured out to her ; there was nothing wild in his eyes, there was nothing wandering in his words. He loved her then, and though the grave had hardly closed a week over his dead wife, she could not resist the out-pouring of that love ; all her own passion, which she had thought dead, but which had only slumbered, awoke anew to life—to live then and there. Robert kneeling before her, (he had never knelt before), Robert loving her, which he did then—however he might change afterwards—she could not resist ; pent up feelings burst forth, reserve was laid aside, the patient, pale, enduring, silent dependent became the enraptured, loving woman. She placed her arms around the wasted form, she even kissed the cheek, the first time, the very first time, she had ever been demonstrative in action towards him, and she said :

“ Oh, Robert, Robert, my own Robert, I

have suffered, but I forgive you. I would die for you!"

He covered her hands, her brow, her cheek with burning kisses, he uttered words sweet in her ears, for they were full of pure, passionate devotion.

At that moment, while he knelt, and while she wept happy tears, the door was burst suddenly open, and there entered Madame George, Mrs. Aubrey, George Aubrey, Gomazzio, and Doctor Gilton, the surgeon from Yanly.

Oh, that Robert had been dignified then, and self-possessed, and bold, and fearless ; but a frightful rage possessed him, a kind of mortal terror, too, of what had been from his cradle instilled into him as the coming evil of his life. There stood men in the chamber, strong, paid, callous Frenchmen, armed with handcuffs and cudgels ; all had been prepared before. He was weak, he was in a foreign land ; the doctor of his native village had

come over purposely, at his step-mother's bidding, to state that the seeds of mental disorder had been always in his brain, from very childhood, and manifested in a strong, strange dislike to himself. Gomazzio, the false Gomazzio, his late attendant, had signed, in conjunction with the English doctor, (though neither could speak a word of the other's tongue), a certificate of his lunacy; and now he was to be chained and gagged—Oh, God of Heaven!—like a wild beast, and taken to a Lunatic Asylum, and, there, real madness must soon come on, and George would be owner of Yanly. He stood by, silent and sad; his wife looked at Anne with fiendish triumph, and Mrs. Aubrey, who had plotted all, even to her having Anne in the house, instead of dismissing her after Harvey Aubrey's death, that she might be an additional proof of his madness, for she divined his love for her. Mrs. Aubrey used opprobrious epithets to Anne, for which she

might have summoned her to an English court of justice, and she accused her of wanting to entrap her mad step-son into marriage. Her mad step-son! He was not mad. Oh, how he fought, like a tiger at bay, with those paid ruffians.

What fearful words he spoke in his impotent rage.

“Devil! incarnate fiend!” he said to his step-mother. “I could find it in my heart to slay you.”

Anne knelt at his feet.

“Robert, for God’s sake, be calm! Trust to me, I will yet save you.”

“Strumpet,” said Mrs. Aubrey, “get out of my house. I only tolerated you here for a purpose. Take your quarter’s salary;” and she pushed towards her a billet de banque.

With these terrible passions raging around her, Anne resolved to put her trust in God, and to be patient. She did not tear the

billet de banque, or fling it at the wicked mother; she only folded it up and put it in her pocket.

"Adieu, Madame," she said, quietly. "When we meet again, our positions will be changed, and you will repent—you, bitterly—of these insults."

Gomazzio approached Anne.

"False man," she said, "away with you."

"I would save you a second time," said the Italian, "and I would—" But she burst from him.

Robert, pinioned and gagged, was forced down the stairs, and into a small apartment, where he was locked in; he was not to be removed till dark. Then Anne went up to her little room, to collect what few clothes and money she possessed, and to think and plan.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RUE PARADIS POISSONIER.

ANNE CAVE felt that she had not a single friend to apply to for advice and assistance. Not one. Madame Prunier was already prejudiced against Robert ; she knew besides that the curse of insanity was in the family. She would tell Anne she felt sure that she had allowed her feelings to carry her away, that her heart had got the better of her judgment, and that she had suffered her morbid and excitable imagination to paint Mrs. Aubrey as a demon-like plotter, when all the while

she was only a woman, protecting herself and the rest of her family, by putting a raving lunatic under restraint. She reflected that she herself had run out of the house frightened to summon medical aid, at the first time of Robert's seizure ; and now that his wife was dead, if she moved a finger in his defence, her motives would be misjudged, and the whole world would laugh her to scorn. True, there was Charles Higham. She might write to him, and he would believe her, and he loved Robert; but before a letter could reach him, wrong and violence would have done their work on Robert, and he would become really what his step-mother wished to prove him. There he lay, gagged and bound. His foolish violence had been the plea for this outrage, and what could she do ? Nothing, absolutely nothing.

For a few moments she sat helpless and silent at the foot of her bed, a strong feeling of rage at his persecutors burning at her

heart's core, but feeling powerless to help or save. At last she sprang to her feet with a wild, feverish energy, and a strange, unearthly determination—she would rescue him or die. Life, fame, the world's scorn, that is, should all be risked in his service. She had promised to be faithful through life and to the death, and now was her time. First she packed her trunk, then she collected what money she possessed, 25 Louis d'or and 10 francs in silver ; she secreted her purse safely in the bosom of her dress, then she lifted her trunk in her own hands ; it was heavy, but she carried it down stairs unassisted. She went to the street-door, and sent a little boy to bring her a voiture. It came, and she told the man to place her trunk inside, then she got in herself.

“ Where to, Mademoiselle ?”

“ To the Rue Paradis Poissonier,” naming a distant street in the faubourg of St. Denis, which she had once passed through. He

drove her there. It was a bright cold day, the Paris world was out in its jewels and silks, and plumes, promenading, and driving, and smiling, and chatting, and bowing, and sweeping the pavements with its costly trains. On they drove slowly, soon they had entered the dingy faubourg St. Denis, Rue Paradis Poissonier.

“Mademoiselle,” said the driver, getting down and looking at Anne through the window, “quel numero?”

“Trente-cinq,” she said, at a venture. “I am not sure,” she said, in dismounting, “that this is the place I seek; if not, I will tell you instantly.” Then she went into the Concierge, whom she found to her great wonder very civil.

“Have you a small apartment to let here, Madame, of two or three rooms, cheap?”

Fate was kind, there were such rooms scantily furnished, to be let at sixty francs a month. She asked to see them, they were on the

third *étage*, dingy and cold and mean ; they consisted of a sitting-room with a fire-place and a red-tiled floor, a rough table, four wooden chairs, and a little sofa covered with blue faded cloth, and a bedroom going out of it with bedstead, hair mattress and blankets, a washing-stand and looking-glass, and bare tiled-floor, the window looking out into the dreary Rue Paradis.

"I will take these rooms, madame," said Anne, to the old Concierge, "if you will get me in some wood and coal at once ; they are not for myself, but for my brother and sister ; my brother is ill ; we are an English family, poor, but respectable. I am going back to London since I am married. I must accompany my husband, but the climate of England would be fatal to my brother. We can give you no renseignments since we are strangers, but if you will write me a receipt for two months' rent I will pay you in advance, and that will surely satisfy your landlord."

The *concierge* agreed, she wrote a scrawl of a receipt, and Anne had her trunk upstairs; then she told her that her brother Mark, and her sister Emma Pit, would arrive that night. She paid her one hundred francs. She paid the driver of the *voiture*, and then she walked into the long Rue St. Denis. She went into an old clothes' shop, and she bought three or four of those plain white caps which are worn by the lower class of women in Paris; she bought also some white aprons, and a large and heavy cloth cloak, much moth-eaten; she bought likewise a grey loose jacket, and black stuff petticoat. She then felt puzzled how to dispose of her own cloak and bonnet, and at last she offered them in part-payment to the woman of the shop, pretending that she could not pay for everything in money, and that she was going as servant-girl into an hotel, where they would not tolerate the wearing of bonnets; the woman believed her; the little black satin bonnet,

and black cloth cloak were gladly accepted ; and then tucking up her dress, she put on the black skirt, braided with blue, the loose grey jacket, and, finally, the white cap ; then, placing the rest of the caps and aprons in a parcel under her arm, she went on again ; but her disguise was not yet complete ; at a *coiffeur's* she bought a front of grey hair, and a bottle of the same kind of dye, for the skin, that she had seen Sophy Aubrey put on her fair face, when she went disguised as a gipsy to a masquerade ball.

The *coiffeur* most probably thought she had some intrigue on hand, harmless in his eyes, when she asked him for a room where she might put on her wig and stain her face unmolested ; he granted her request on payment of a franc.

With her grey hair, and dark brown face, and stooping gait, her disguise was excellent ;

she hardly knew herself ; and when she had bought herself a pack of fortune-telling cards, she felt almost proud of her appearance. She lowered her head as she walked very carefully to one other shop she went away to, and what she purchased at those shops she slung in a basket on her arm. Then she hired a *voiture*, which set her down in the *Boulevard des Italiens* ; she got out and proceeded with a beating heart to *numero vingt huit* in the *Rue Taitbout* ; at the entrance coming into the street she encountered Gomazzio ; he stopped and addressed her :

“ You have the look of a fortune-teller ; are you not ashamed,” said he, “ at your time of life, to follow such a trade ? ”

“ No, monsieur,” she said boldly, for she was still nerved by an almost unearthly resolution. “ I earn my bread by it.”

“ Ha ! ” cried the Italian, with sudden interest, “ you are then English ? ”

"Je suis Allemande, Monsieur." She knew he could not understand German. He seemed to lose all interest in her, and was walking off —when he returned :

" You have not met with a young lady, pale, and very pretty, and dressed in black, in this street ?"

" Monsieur, I met just such a lady at the corner ; she went in the direction of the *Rue de la Paix*."

He hurried on.

Thus she continued to tell falsehoods unblushingly, unfalteringly. Surely in this case the end justified the means. The weak and oppressed must have recourse in extreme cases to stratagem. At this time she did not pause to bemoan her delinquency, she even felt rejoiced to have deceived Gomazzio. She mounted the stairs ; on the first *étage*, in an empty, uninhabited room, she knew that Robert lay helpless. That side of the house

was still to let. She rang the bell ; the door was opened by one of the men, the paid captors of Robert, a short, thick, brutal-looking fellow, in a blue blouse, and with a red, bloated face ; her heart failed her ; he held the key of the chamber in his butcher's fist, and he glared at Anne savagely.

" De quoi avez vous besoin ?" he demanded, roughly.

" Monsieur, I am a fortune-teller ; something in your face tells me you are born to good luck ; let me look into my cards, and see what is in store for you."

" You old German hag," he said, rudely ; " you tell nothing but a heap of lies."

Delighted at his mistaking her nation, she answered :

" Monsieur, you are wrong ; I dreamt of you last night, though you are a stranger to me. I was directed in my dream to come and tell the fortune of Emile Dubois, and

to direct him to where he might find a purse filled with golden *louis*."

She had heard Gomazzio address him as Emile Dubois.

"How do you know anything about my name?" he asked, a little startled.

"I dreamt of you last night," she answered.

"You tell lies," said Emile Dubois, "you tell lies, old woman."

She did not deny the charge—how could she? but she drew from her pocket a bottle of sweet spiced wine, and, drawing out the cork, said courteously:

"Will Monsieur drink his own health, before I tell him his bonus?"

He glanced at her suspiciously for an instant, then put his lip to the bottle, sipped it, found its contents good, took a deeper draught, and finally returned it, smacking his lips.

"What did madame dream of me?"

"That Emile Dubois, whom she should find in the *Rue Taitbout*, was to go to the church of the *Panthéon*, and there search near the walk until he found a purse containing two hundred *louis d'ors*."

"Do you think me a fool?" returned the man, with a stupid expression stealing over his face.

"A fool, monsieur—you appear to be the most sensible person I have ever met with." She handed the wine to him again. "Taste a little more of this wine whilst I sort my cards."

He took another pull at the spiced wine; meanwhile she drew out her weird-looking pack of cards; she knelt on the floor and spread them out in four rows, one below the other, eight a line.

"I see fortune coming to monsieur, by the hands of a woman, withered and aged—myself, monsieur; this card, with flowers painted on it, shows that monsieur's good fortune will

lead to the possession of fields and gardens, monsieur will become a landowner."

A heavy snore caused Anne to look up. The drugged wine had taken effect. Monsieur Emile Dubois slept soundly on the floor of the lobby. With beating heart she approached the door of the room she had seen Robert dragged into ; the key was outside, but there was still another gentleman of the Dubois species to be got over, and detection might yet overtake her. She tapped timidly at the door—no answer ; she tapped again—still no answer ; she turned the key in the lock and entered. On the bare, dirty floor, lay Robert, bound hand and foot, and with a handkerchief tied across his mouth ; his face was flushed, and his eyes bright and wild.

Now, at the last, even, she might spoil all ! but there was no one else in the room. She came up and looked at him ; his eyes peered into her darkened face curiously. She approached him nearly :

“ Robert—I am Anne, come to save you ; lie still, make no noise, I entreat you !” One snip of her scissors freed his mouth.

“ Where is the other man ?”

“ He went out to get pipes and drink, an hour ago, for himself and the other fellow ; he will be here instantly, it is useless my trying to escape. Oh, Anne, what a frightful disguise.”

She cut the cords which bound his feet, and legs, and arms, and he stood free and erect, but his hands were still manacled ; that she could not rectify. She flung over him the immense heavy cloth cloak ; she put a wig of grey hair on his head, and then she went into the lobby, and, of her own strength, dragged the senseless Dubois into the room ; then she pushed Robert out, who stood there stupified, she turned the key in the lock, and put it in her pocket ; she took Robert’s arm under his cloak, and they went down stairs and out into the street, like people walking in a dream.

Anne waited until they reached the Rue St. Honoré, and then she called a *voiture*; they entered in complete silence, and drove to the Rue Paradis. It was now dark; they refused the *concierge's* offer of a light; they hurried to their apartment, where she had good-naturedly lighted for them a fire. She locked the door, and then, throwing off her disguise, she flung herself on the ground and thanked God for Robert's safe deliverance.

He threw aside his cloak and wig, gave one hopeless look at his fettered hands, and sank fainting on the ground.

How, by her own efforts, and with no better tools than an iron poker, with which she hammered away, she freed him from his handcuffs, how having burnt the wigs, which would now only serve as means of detection, she went out in her own dress, and with her own brown hair—having first washed the stain from her face; and how that she returned with wine and supper, and Robert,

faint and famished, made a good meal, and then slept, through sheer exhaustion, on the ground; how that she assisted him to the bed in the next chamber, covered him warmly with blankets, and then, wrapped in the moth-eaten cloak of his disguise, she herself slept soundly on the blue, faded sofa in the sitting-room; how that for days he lay between life and death, in renewed fever, on that dingy bed; and how that she feared the life that she prized, would, after all, fall a sacrifice to his step-mother's cruelty; all this is left to the reader to picture. She supposed, in the eyes of the prudent world, her offence was rank enough to swell to heaven, in that she did reside in those two small apartments with Robert Aubrey, but the very thought of shame or blame was distant from her—to sit and watch his unconscious slumbers, to hold in hers the pallid, fevered hand, to administer the cooling drinks, to leave her own couch twenty times

in the night, that she might comfort him by wetting his throbbing temples or placing heated flannels to his stone cold feet ; these were her tasks ; she never left him but when, disguised as a grisette in white cap and apron, she was compelled to go and purchase food for them both ; she called in no doctor ; she feared to excite suspicion, and, remembering Gomazzio's regime, she strictly attended to it. On the third day the fever left him, and on the day week of the entrance to their dingy lodgings he was sufficiently restored to sit up, to ask her for assistance in dressing, and to express a wish to come towards evening into the sitting room and take tea, sitting on the sofa by the fire. She was, notwithstanding her terrible anxiety, almost happy that evening ; she made a bright fire, she placed tea and milk, and dried plums, and fresh oranges, and delicious rolls of fine wheaten bread, on the little table, to try and tempt his weakly appetite ; then she made herself look

neat and bright by brushing her hair and putting on a becoming rose coloured ribbon over the dark plain dress she always wore at that time, and then she went into his room with warm water and clean linen (she had purchased for him a change or two at a ready-made warehouse), and she told him to wash and dress, and call her when he had need. Presently he called her—he looked so gaunt and thin ; his clothes seemed to hang upon him loosely, and his ablutions had failed to call the least particle of colour into his marble-like cheek :

“ Don’t I look a poor weak wretch, my darling,” he said, with a half laugh. “ I am afraid all your care will be thrown away in the end. I don’t think I shall stand in George’s way much longer.”

“ Robert—look up, and hope—you will be in health and prosperity by this day six months, I feel convinced.”

“ Comforter,” he said, fondly, caressing her

cheek with his hand. Then hastily withdrawing it, "Will you help me on with my coat?"

"This dressing gown will be more comfortable," she said, throwing one over him, "and these slippers."

"Why, how did you get them, my child?"

"I bought them, Robert."

"With your own poor little money?"

"Yes, Robert."

She helped him into the sitting room ; he lay on the little blue sofa by the fire, and she made him a cup of tea. She sat and watched him drink it, and she gave him a little delicious roll, with fresh butter.

"Anne, how long is this to last?"

"What, Robert?"

"This hiding. It was only by brute force that Mrs. Aubrey at last proceeded to her object ; the last thing I should have thought her capable of. I never dreamt of being savagely assaulted and knocked down in our own

house. It was a vulgar, unscientific way of going to work, was it not?"

"Robert, don't talk of it now."

"If I don't talk I shall think more; don't torment me, dear, with the usual sick room twaddle; talk to me reasonably, will you?"

"Yes, Robert, if you wish it."

"Of course I do. Now, Anne, what are we to do when I get stronger? I am afraid to go out at present in Paris, even if I had strength, because I feel sure that Mrs. Aubrey's emissaries are lurking for me at the privy corners of the streets; here I should have no redress, but I must write home; write to my tenants and to Doctor Piercer, and to Charles Higham and Harry Danvers, and apprise them of my step-mother's plot, and I must have over a regular guard of my tenancy to protect my person, and then I must return to England, show myself in London, show that I am sane, and then pro-

ceed against Mrs. Aubrey and that rascal, Gilton. The Italian, I suppose, I can't get at."

He paused, then suddenly turning to Anne said, quietly, "you do not think me mad, do you?"

"Not more than I am," she said firmly.

"God bless you for the tone and the words, my own Anne." He made as though he would have seized her hand, but he drew suddenly back. "I have had violent brain fever, without doubt," he said presently, "but notwithstanding my great dread of this calamity, which has worked on my nerves terribly, I do not think I have the least real tendency to insanity."

"I do not think you have."

"But it is in the family you know, Anne."

"Why should you be the one to dread it?"

He paused.

"I will tell you that another time, not now. Do you know, Anne, I have thought much of

poor Jane to-day, and of my strange love for her, and still more strange dislike afterwards. It was when I found her a poor weak simple creature, when I found that she had not even dismissed me at first of her own free will, but only by following the advice of the Earl, her uncle, when I found that the cruel letter she had sent me when I was at Yanly that autumn time was not written by herself, but by her cousin, and was dictated by my step-mother, word for word, when I found that her scorn for me in her uncle's library arose from sheer terror of me, whom my step-mother had represented to her as a mad man, when I found that her intense reticence and cold calmness in her early youth, which I had viewed through the hazy and fiery atmosphere of my own inscrutable passion, was only common timidity, and that she, on her part, had always thought me strangely cold and quiet; when I discovered that in actual life Jane and I had nothing in common, that she

could not comprehend a line of the poetry I read to her, and that all her soul was wrapped up in dress and fashion, and the hopes of one day possessing a set of diamonds equal to those of the Duchess of Argyle, and that she ceased not to wish herself mistress of Yanly Manor; when the knowledge of these things came to me, I began to dislike Jane, not as bitterly, perhaps, as I represented in the ravings of my fever, but still I began to dislike her, and I left her to herself and often spoke rudely to her. I am sorry now," he sighed. "Anne, I love you much, and deeply, more than I dare speak of now and here, for you are unprotected. The world will speak cruel and hard things of you, my darling, for this very noble act you have performed towards me, this pains me. I wish my wife to be like Cæsar's—above reproach."

"Robert, that thought I have driven out as soon as it had entered my head."

“What will the world say?”

“Oh, Robert! it will blight my fame for ever for this act, and it will couple my name with reproach and shame; but you know I promised to be faithful to the death. This shame will be harder to bear than death, but I will bear it for your sake. I know, and you know, that in thought, word, and deed, I am innocent before God; as for my name after all it is but the idle breath. I sacrifice it in your cause, and I think that I act well.”

“My whole life, and love, and soul, shall henceforth be devoted to you,” said Robert, fervently; “but words avail not, let my actions speak for themselves.”

They parted that night almost without clasping hands, but their sleep was sweet and deep, and their hopes high.

CHAPTER XII.

THE next morning Anne awoke early, dressed herself, lighted the fire, and without disturbing Robert by opening the door of his chamber she went out, having on her grisette's cap and jacket, safely locked the outer door of the apartment, and took the key with her. As she passed the lodge of the Concierge, the only person in the house she knew to speak to, though all the flats were occupied, she came out and asked her how was Monsieur, her brother?

"He is much better, thank you, madame."

"But it is cold, and a sleet falling on you ; going out such a morning ?"

"Madame, I am going to purchase a little chocolate for our breakfast. My brother fancies it more than anything."

Just then a fresh coloured, stout, blue-eyed country-looking man in a blouse stepped out from the lodge of the concierge, where he had been warming himself by the fire in the stove.

"I am going to the epicerier at the corner of the Rue Paradis," said he, good-naturedly, "and if Mademoiselle will trust me with the purchase of the chocolate I will save her a wet walk."

Anne thanked this person, and as she disliked wind and sleet, felt her head ill-protected against the weather in her grisette's cap, she allowed the fresh-coloured friend of the concierge to execute her mission for her. She remained by the stove talking to the old

woman ; presently returned the fresh-coloured countryman with her chocolate ; she thanked him, wished them both good morning, went up to the apartment, locked herself in, and made the breakfast. She took in Robert's to him, and while he partook of it she related to him the obliging little act of the countryman. He was grateful to the poor man, and he asked her if she thought he would feel insulted if she offered him a present for his service ?

"I think he would," she said, "he seems such a respectable man."

"I ought to have a bank of England note for a hundred pounds in the breast pocket of my coat, we must get that changed soon."

"Not yet," she answered, "it will excite suspicion."

"And how much money of your own have you remaining, my own, own darling?"

"About eight louis d'ors, Robert."

"Then you will have to change that note

soon, as well to do it now as later ; look in the pocket, Anne ?”

She looked, she turned out all the pockets, but no note was to be found.

“ Those gentlemen whom you tricked so cleverly must have robbed me of it,” said Robert. “ It will not benefit them, for they cannot possibly change it without exciting suspicion. I see what must be done. I must write to Chyld, our lawyer. I must desire him to send me two hundred pounds at once to the Bank in the Rue Neuve des Mathurins.”

“ Is that Chyld a friend of yours, Robert ?”

“ Not particularly, I scarcely know him to speak to.”

“ Then take my advice, don’t write to him ; Mrs. Aubrey will have gained his ear by this time, and he will send the enemies down upon us.”

“ But who can I write to ? Harry Danvers is travelling in Germany, and I have

lost his address, and Charles Higham is too poor."

Anne knew not what to advise, already would Mrs. Aubrey have blasted her good name, and Gomazzio, too, at the Pruniers, so that she dared not go there."

"What is to be done?" said Robert, a little impatiently, "you see we can't starve, besides we must get back to England. I will write to the manager of the Bank of England and desire him to forward me money."

"But your step-mother will have been beforehand with you there. Without doubt the manager will only forward your letter to Mrs. Aubrey."

"You think so, then according to you we must die of hunger—I, who am the rightful owner of untold wealth. This is folly, my dear girl."

"No, Robert, until you can show yourself to your lawyer, your banker, your doctor, Doctor Piercey I mean, and any London

physician you choose ; until you do this, and while you are in hiding, the world will believe your calm, lady-like, sensible step-mother's statement ; it will not credit your written protestations of sanity."

"Then why the devil should I be in hiding ?" he cried, passionately ; "I won't stand it any longer. I will go out and show myself, and defy them all."

"No, Robert, you are too weak ; you can scarcely stand. You talk nonsense about going out, you can't think of it for a fortnight at least."

He laughed with restored good-humour, and as he leant back on his pillow he said—

"I am an ungrateful, impatient dog, am I not, dear?"

"No, Robert, I don't think you so ; but now listen to me. You must get strong, and then you can do every thing ; meanwhile I would advise your writing to the nobleman with

whom you were travelling in Italy—Lord Courtenay, was it not?"'

An expression of pain crossed his face as he answered, confusedly—

"No, he knows all about, about, you know what."

"About what, Robert?"

"About the Haughtons."

"But he also knows you are not mad."

"Well Anne, I can't write to him."

"Very well; then what shall we do?"

"I have a diamond ring and watch; these you might sell here in Paris easily. Oh, Anne, it is terrible for me to be obliged to send you alone and unprotected into the streets of Paris, it is terrible."

"But God protects me, Robert."

"Yes, it is not that, but some day you will be my wife, you will be Mrs. Aubrey."

"Robert, are you ashamed of me already?"

"Ashamed, my life? No, proud, proud of your purity, your self-devotion, your courage,

your faith, your patience. Proud, proud at my very heart's core of you, Anne."

She did not talk more to him then. He expressed himself too weak to rise that day, so when she had breakfasted and swept out the front room, she took the ring and watch, resolved to ease his mind by obtaining what money she could for them, and she went out as the rain had ceased, and plunged into the circuitous streets of the faubourg St. Denis.

"Will Mademoiselle pardon me one instant?" said a voice behind.

She turned; there stood her fresh coloured countryman of the morning.

"Mademoiselle, in the Rue de Colissée close at hand is a poor little girl, but twelve years old, she is the daughter of my only sister, who is married the second time to a regular ruffian named Francois Perret; this wretch ill-treats my sister and her child, and only this morning I have been told that it is his intention this very night to sell the little Azile to an

itinerant showman. I have neither wife nor children of my own. I am going to Switzerland to-morrow, where I have a little cottage and a farm. I wish to take this poor little one with me, but if I show myself in the Rue Colissée this ruffian step-father will not let the child stir. Will you, Mademoiselle, you, who have a countenance so amiable, and who seemed so grateful for my little service of this morning, step five minutes out of your way to rescue an innocent child from a fate worse than death. When you have found numero vingt-deux Rue de Colissée, ask for the sixth étage, and for the family of Francois Perret, the cobbler. When once admitted you can begin to scold Madame Perret, for not having let your mother know that she was ill. She will wonder who you are, but if you raise your left hand thus, she will understand the sign and that you come from me—me whom she believes to be yet in Switzerland, and she will offer no opposi-

tion to the proposal that the little Azile shall follow you into the rue St. Denis, that you may send her back with some cream and cakes for her sick mother."

This countryman's simple manner touched Anne much; she did not object to turn out of her way to oblige so excellent and feeling a creature. She could not express what an air of candour and open-heartedness he possessed, nor how she felt her sympathy excited on behalf of the hapless Azile.

"Where shall I find the Rue de Colissée, my friend?" she asked.

"Turn to the left and then to the right, Mademoiselle, cross a little court, called the Court St. Martin, and you will find yourself in the rue you desire. I will wait here your return, and you shall see with what transports of joy the poor Azile will embrace her uncle Jean."

Anne turned to the left and then to the right, she found no Court St. Martin. She

turned again, she got bewildered in a labyrinth of thinly-populated streets. She inquired of some boys for the Rue de Colissée, they knew of no such street. She turned again. At first, no shadow of suspicion crossed her mind, and if the reader is inclined to think her an idiot for her pains, she would only say that had that same fresh-coloured Frenchman appealed to him as he had appealed to her, she verily believes he in like manner would have credited every word that Frenchman uttered. At last, to her horror and alarm, she discovered that she had lost her key. She knew not how she regained the Rue Paradis Poissonier, but she did regain it, and she rushed breathless to the concierge.

She found the old woman weeping and trembling. "Alas, Mademoiselle, your brother is gone."

"Gone?" she exclaimed, wildly.

"Mademoiselle, that countryman who

fetched your chocolate this morning came here with your key in his hand ; he had two other men with him ; I heard him laugh, and say that he had got the cunning little fox out of the road. Then he went up-stairs. I heard, I am sure I heard, the report of a pistol, but I have been too frightened to go up-stairs. They dragged him out into the street, but I fear he was senseless ; then they had a voiture in waiting, and when they were gone a fruit woman in the street told me the name of that countryman. Mademoiselle, he is Vidocq, the great French detective."

Then Anne sprang up the stairs without speaking ; she gained her apartment ; she found her trunk broken open, her things scattered about on the floor ; her linen, her books, her dresses, soiled, torn, and trampled on, lay around. She went into the bedroom, Robert's coat and trousers still hung behind the door. There was a smell of powder in the room, the bed clothes were torn, and on

the pillow and on the sheet were two great stains of dark crimson blood, yet wet. When she saw this, her heart died within her, and she sank insensible on the floor.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ITALIAN.

“ SHE opens her eyes, she revives,” said a voice in French, “ give her again the smelling-bottle; now raise her head so; how does Mademoiselle find herself?”

Anne opened her eyes with a feeling of pain, and a terror of she knew not what. She encountered the ugly face of Gomazzio, and then dawned upon her the recollection of a something terrible that had happened to the being dearest to her.

“ Robert,” she exclaimed, fiercely, “ you

have murdered him. I saw blood, it will be required at your hands, villain of an Italian."

"Doucement, doucement," replied Gomazzio, with a very perceptible sneer. "Before you call names, remember who you are yourself."

She half raised herself on her arm, and looked round the room. The strong contempt she felt for Gomazzio prevented her being enraged at his words. She saw that she had been carried into the sitting room and laid on the blue sofa; her things were still scattered about on the floor, and Gomazzio and the concierge stood close to her.

"Drink some of this," said Gomazzio, putting a glass of cordial to her lips.

"Nothing at your hands," she answered, pushing it from her, and then pointing to the door, "leave my room at once, and never presume to enter my presence or to speak to me again."

"Little English tiger," said Gomazzio, "I have called you that two years ago, it is an appropriate name; but I do not mean to leave your apartment, ma chère. I mean to stay here and talk to you for an hour, and I mean you to listen to me."

"You have then something very interesting to communicate," she said, scornfully. "It will be the first time that your conversation has ever interested me, for I detested you from the first moment I ever saw you."

Was she wrong, or did the Italian's face grow a shade paler, as she spoke those words?

"Mademoiselle," he said, "you have never been at any pains to conceal your scorn of me but once, and that was when I placed you with Madame Prunier, then you expressed yourself grateful, and only then."

"That is nothing," she answered, hastily, "the weight of that obligation does not at all overwhelm me."

"Mon Dieu," exclaimed the Italian, throwing up his hands, "this disdain is frightful. What have I done to deserve it?"

"What? can you ask? What, Gomazzio, Gonazzio? For gain, for gold, you have sold yourself to a frightful lie. You have said Robert Aubrey was mad, when you know in your heart he is as sane as yourself. You have set spies upon him, hunted him down, and now his blood has been shed by these French spies, and you ask what you have done."

"How do you know that it is the blood of Robert Aubrey which stains the pillow in the next room?"

"Is it not?"

"Then, ha, ha, ha, then you condescend, Mademoiselle, to ask me a question, and just now you told me never to presume to speak to you again. Suppose I take you at your word, and leave your questions unanswered? I know well whose blood that is. I know

well where your dear Robert Aubrey, Robert rascal, Robert devil, is," he added, working himself into a rage, "and perhaps I will tell you nothing more now."

"He who lends himself to one great falsehood, will not scruple to tell many more; I would not believe what you told me; leave me, therefore."

"Mademoiselle, will you let me speak to you alone? send away this woman, I wish to speak seriously to you. On my honour, on my soul, I swear that I will speak truly. I swear by our holy religion (he crossed himself), by the blessed Mary (he crossed himself again), and by the wrongs of my oppressed country; will you listen to me?"

"Yes," said she doggedly, "I suppose I must hear what you have to say. Madame Pelletier, kindly leave me for a few minutes."

She went out. Then Gomazzio locked the door, and handed Anne the key; then he

seated himself by the now empty fire-place, and began thus—

“ I have often been told all my life long that the English were the greatest nation on earth ; that, like the ancient Roman soldiers, their patience was unwearied, their courage undaunted, and their honour unsullied. Unconsciously I had imbibed a strong feeling of admiration for these Islanders, mingled, however, with a sort of jealousy. I had met with but few English in my native city of Turin, but I had always promised myself that one day I would marry an English wife. You might scorn me for thinking that, with my ugly face, I could win a wife at all ; but I am rich, mademoiselle, richer than I seem. Gomazzio had no need to embrace any profession ; but I passionately loved the science of medicine, and I came to Paris to study it. I studied it ; men rose up and praised me. I became famous, but I had still griefs, the enslavement of my country, and the ugly face

which forbade my hoping ever to be loved. At this time I was told of an Englishwoman of rank, who had passed much of her time on the continent, and who wished to consult me in regard to her health. Mademoiselle, that woman was Mrs. Aubrey. She wrote me many letters from England, describing the nervous attacks to which she was a victim, and through it all there struggled a mystery, I knew not what, but I felt there was more to be learnt. Well, this Englishwoman came to Paris, this model wife and mother, as I had been led to believe all women of her nation were. My nature is naturally secret, and I saw that if I would learn all I must dissemble. Little by little, this Englishwoman opened to me her heart, this mother. Mon dieu, mon dieu, it was horrible ; she has a step-son, whom she hates, her own son she professes to love. She wishes to remove the eldest one, but how ? Sacre ! sacre ! It is like the plot of a fiend incarnate, it froze my blood to hear it, though

I smiled and bowed when she proposed to me horrible crimes."

Gomazzio arose and paced the room wildly, then stopping before her he said—

"There was a curse of madness in this family—that is in the family into which this woman had married. Maud Haughton, the former wife of Harvey Aubrey, had died mad two years after her marriage. Philip, her brother, would have met a like fate, had he not perished, in the year 1792, by the guillotine. When this wife of Harvey Aubrey learnt these facts, she smiled to herself and determined to wait quietly for the fiend to lay its cruel hands upon her step-son; then her own son, George, would become the heir. Robert grew in stature and in beauty, in sense too—his step-mother smiled and watched him—then came the first down of manhood upon his cheek, the first fire of passion into his eye; he loved, and still no outbreaking of the demon. Sacre, Mademoiselle, this English-

woman began to grow sadly impatient. Robert seemed matchless in strength, perfect in health, with pure blood, with clear brain ; hot, indeed, were his passions, and by attacking him there, by infuriating them, this woman hoped to upset that great goddess of reason whom these French so worship, and to shut up Robert a raving lunatic. You have heard how the plot failed. His heart was nearly broken, his nature was changed, but reason reigned still triumphant,—Robert was not mad. Now, then, began the thick of the plot; Madame had heard of my fame, of my skill in treating certain brain diseases. She wrote to me from England, ‘she had a most particular case to consult me upon.’ I corresponded with her long before the secret transpired. Nay, she came to Paris, and I was still ignorant of her meaning—little by little the secret oozed out—I was to be paid one hundred thousand francs, if I would—can you guess?—so drug and physic Robert

Aubrey, that the devilish compounds I gave to him might inflame and disease his brain, and so steal away that reasonable soul of man, which is God's free gift to the human race !

“ You will ask me why I temporised and listened ? why I did not gnash my teeth at this woman-fiend, and curse her where she stood ? Mademoiselle, I had two strong reasons for reticence ; one was, that in the house of this creature I found a fair young girl, the ideal realised of all that I had conceived of good, or sweet, or bright, or innocent in English character. I loved this girl as I had never loved before ; but I found that her heart was given away, given to this doomed step-son, who did not value it, but was even then playing a double part, being again enamoured of his old love, the Countess Jane ; then I began to hate this man ; mon Dieu ! how I hated him ! I now wished vehemently that he might run mad—”

“ And you drugged him ?”

“ No, no, Mademoiselle. Gomazzio is not yet a devil—will you ever learn that he has a heart and a soul, and that to you he has devoted both ?”

“ Monsieur !”

“ Listen, girl, child, woman, whom I have loved and still love—listen—I brought about that wedding between the Countess Jane and the false, hot-brained Aubrey. I did it for your good ; and I went into Italy, leaving you to get over your grief as best you could, intending to return when your heart should have wearied with mourning over the inevitable—intending to return, and flinging myself at your feet, to entreat you to share the life of Gomazzio, and to take him to you as your husband. What do I find when I return from Italy ? I find this fair girl still loving, still drooping, still hanging about the bedside of this Aubrey, who is mad at last, but only with a temporary madness. Then comes

strange and startling sad news—the wife of this man is dead—*Mon Dieu!* just after his father has died—he is now the owner of that fine English estate called Yanly Manor. Then he begins to recover, and the first use he makes of his return to reason and to strength is to kneel again at the feet of that girl whom he has already made to suffer so much, and to swear false love to her."

"False love!"

"What else, poor, vain, deluded fool, what else?"

"And what," said Anne, eagerly, "what did you do then?"

She ignored his unjust and insulting insinuations as she ignored his love.

"Then awoke revenge, hatred, and, believe me, girl, a wish to save your innocence." (She made an impatient gesture of scorn.) "Then, intending only to shut up this bad man for a time, I agreed to sign a false com-

mission of lunacy. Appreciate, Mademoiselle, the distinction between the crime I was supplicated to commit and that which I committed."

" You allow that, Monsieur."

" Mademoiselle, I avow it with my hand upon my heart, that heart which you have outraged and broken. But even you, in your hardness and cruelty, are not unjust ; even you will judge that there is a wide difference between the wilful injuring of a man's brain by drugs administered, and the simple lie, the false statement that he is mad when he is sane, when one's object is only to shut him out of harm's way for a time, and to prevent his committing a deadly wrong. Thus this false Aubrey was carried away and gagged, and bound, by my connivance, like a felon. Ha ! look at me, Mademoiselle, I glory in that act;" and the Italian, with dilating nostril and glittering eye, stood, so Anne

thought, like a spirit of evil in that bare room, and amid the disorder which reigned there, and which he had created.

"Gomazzio, you are a villain. Like Lucifer, you glory in the desolation you have wrought. Only let me see the last of your abhorred face. Only leave me. Leave me."

"Mademoiselle, you shall hear the end of my tale, and then you will not be thus anxious to get quit of me. When the flight of this Aubrey was discovered, suspicion did not at first point to you; but when I set Vidocq on the scent, he soon came to me with the facts he had made himself master of. For a week I have known that you were living here, the lost paramour of Robert Aubrey."

"So the world will judge me," said Anne, gravely. "I am prepared for that."

"But now," continued Gomazzio, "I am divided between two courses of action—I want to punish this Aubrey, I want to save

you from further ruin ; but, even more, I want to punish this vile English mother, this tiger in a woman's hide. How shall I act ? Aubrey is now in my lodgings, carefully tended. He is not hurt—that blood on the sheet is but a wound from the arm of one of his gaolers, who was hurt by the accidental going off of his own pistol. Now do you understand my motives ? Do you comprehend that while I shudder at the wickedness of Mrs. Aubrey, I still would willingly shut up such a reprobate as her step-son. I will take you to my lodgings, where you may see your betrayer, unhurt, though in custody. Then, perhaps, you will listen to my plans for you and for him, with something like patience. Put on your cloak over your head, and follow me. I will order a voiture."

And Anne followed the Italian down the stairs and into the street.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ITALIAN.

GOMAZZIO led Anne into a voiture, and he did not speak once to her while rumbling over the stones in the direction of his house in the Boulevard. When it came to a stand he assisted her out, and then silently preceded her up the wide staircase which led to his apartment. He rang the bell, and the door was drawn back by a servant in livery, who preceded the doctor and Anne into a large, handsome, brilliantly lighted room. Near the fire-place, leaning back in a soft, velvet

cushioned chair, sat Robert Aubrey, white and dazed looking. He started to his feet when Anne entered, and went towards her.

"Sit down, man," said Gomazzio, fiercely.

"What do you mean," retorted Robert, furiously, "do you dare to dictate to me?"

"Aye, I dare," said the Italian, and a savage gleam shot from his eye. "I hate you, Aubrey—you are a villain, do you hear? and I possess power over you—unjust power, but still power. I can shut you up as a lunatic for life, and unless you obey me in all things I will do it."

"Obey you," said Robert, with scornful emphasis.

"Aye, and first I order that you never again speak to this girl whom you have ruined, that you never again touch her hand as long as you live."

"I purpose," returned Robert, loftily,

"taking her hand in mine before the altar soon, and pledging myself to cherish and keep her as long as we both shall live."

" You purposed doing that two years ago, Monsieur, but your purpose did not prevent your marrying the Countess Jane, and leaving Anne Cave to break her heart, run mad, or die at her leisure."

" You are just," said Robert, almost with a sob, " I acted the part of a demon ; but now only try me ; only give me the hand of Anne in mine, and a priest to make the clasp lawful and binding, and you shall see me devote my whole life to her, and all the love of my soul !"

" I would fain see justice done to this girl whom you have ruined," said Gomazzio, " but I don't believe you—listen, man, I will marry her, lost as she is, and I will give your step-mother the lie, expose her letters, and help you to reinstate yourself as owner of Yanly, and to oust your brother, who is now

in unlawful possession of your property, if only you will promise not to poison further the ear of this lost girl."

"Lost," Robert ejaculated, and he clenched his teeth in passion. "Man, that girl is pure as an angel, self-sacrificing as any saint in your calendar, spotless as your Madonna—during these weeks that I have been wracked with fever she has been at once my nurse, my better angel, my teacher, my guide to holier thoughts, to higher actions—her nights have been spent in prayer and watchings, her days in kindly acts of rigorous self devotion. Speak another word against my intended wife, and I hurl you to the ground."

Gomazzio's eyes shone; in another moment he had turned upon Anne:

"I must needs believe this man; truth gleams in his eye, and makes itself heard in his voice. Mademoiselle, I can still mingle your name with that of my mother in my prayers, and you will marry this Aubrey."

Before she could answer, the outer bell rang loudly, and almost immediately there came into the room Mrs. Aubrey, magnificent in her rich mourning dress. Close in her steps followed the elegant George and his haughty wife. Anne was cowardly enough to shrink away from these ladies, but Robert seized her hand, and drawing himself up to his full height he stood right in front of his step-mother.

"Do you see the future Lady of Yanly Manor, Mrs. Aubrey?" he said. "I intend to marry Miss Cave to-morrow."

Mrs. Aubrey threw herself into a seat, and ignored Robert's presence and words :

"I am surprised, Monsieur le Docteur, at your indulging your patient with the presence of that creature."

"I would have had her sent to the galleys, if I could have had my way," said Madame George.

Then the Italian stood before the step-

mother, with locked arms, and his old sardonic leer sat upon his ugly mouth. “I sent for you, madame, to tell you that—thanks to Vidocq—I have at last re-captured Mr. Aubrey, the owner of Yanly Manor. Madame, the property is entailed, is it not?”

“What have you to do with that?” said George, roughly. “He is a madman—I am the owner of all the property; you had better address yourself to me in regard to the expenses of his board and lodgings. You sent for me, too.”

“I did, monsieur, and I will thank you to listen to me. That woman, your mother, has been to me a curious analytical study for the last three years. I wished to learn the depths to which human nature can descend in its search for gold and goods—educated, refined human nature—not low, untaught, brutality, which is akin to the animals—but that rarefied essence of humanity which calls itself a soul, and seeks all that is most valuable in

learning, in art, in music, in delicacy of manner, in the beauties of nature, in the elevation of science, in the outward code of morals even. There sits the impersonation of a hellish fiend under the guise of a handsome, sensible, soft-voiced, intellectual, refined woman."

Mrs. Aubrey started to her feet in wild amaze, and with a look like terror in her large eyes.

"Madame, you know I hold letters from you in your hand-writing, signed, too, with your name, in which you counsel me to destroy and disease the brain of your step-son, with drugs, and you offer me a liberal reward for the act."

She caught at the back of a chair for support, and looked feebly around her.

"I planned your punishment from the first, and now I administer ; it is your humiliation and exposure in the presence of your son and step-son. Why I have delayed so long, why

I have allowed your step-son to suffer so much, may occur to you. I loved—I still love this girl whom he has in one sense made to suffer; I wished to punish him; but now I find they are really about to marry, and if you do not withdraw your false charge of lunacy, I will expose you publicly, and you will probably be imprisoned, you—”

Mrs. Aubrey found voice at last. “It is you who are demon and fiend,” she said; “you lured me on, you tempted me on, you know you did.”

“*Sacre,*” and the Italian spread out his palms, and then putting his finger to the side of his nose, “had you not planned that I should assist you in this before you had ever looked in my face. Attempt no excuse! write out a confession of having been under a mistake—see, I have drawn one up—you have but to sign your name—it has already mine to it, and also that of Gilton, who is, like yourself, in my power.”

And with faltering fingers Mrs. Aubrey signed her name to the paper. Mrs. George went into violent hysterics; Gomazzio went to her with some restoratives; George looked savagely and stupidly from one to the other; Robert and Anne stood with clasped hands—he erect, dignified—she shrinking, trembling, at her own happiness, and as yet scarce believing in its reality. He spoke to his step-mother and his brother George:

"I would willingly," he said, addressing George, "believe that you have been no party to this diabolical plot, but at any rate I shall make a handsome provision for you as befits an Aubrey and a gentleman—for you, madam," turning to Mrs. Aubrey, "there remains your marriage settlement sufficient for your wants."

She looked him boldly in the face, and the shame of her situation seemed forgotten by her, when her eyes rested upon her loathed step-son.

"I would do all I have done over again," she said, "if I could obtain my ends and see you humiliated; but patience, the fate of your mother still hangs over you," and she swept out of the room, and was soon followed by George and Madame George.

When the other three were alone Robert walked up to the Italian and offered him his hand.

"Let us be friends," he said, "I forgive what you have inflicted on me."

"I will not take your hand," said the Italian, "I have done you justice, but I detest you."

Robert then led Anne out of the room. That night they sought and obtained an asylum in the house of Madame Prunier.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE LOUVRE.

A MONTH has rolled past. Anne Cave is the wedded wife of Robert Aubrey ; her position seems still to her so unreal that she cannot believe in the reality of her happiness. One day she was walking with her husband thro' the Louvre, not so intent upon the paintings as upon the busy stream of human life that flowed past them, when in the crowd she suddenly saw a young and lovely face which she knew—the eyes caught hers, and a mutual recognition ensued. The beautiful girl was

Amy Eastdom—by her side was a toddling wee thing, and she leaned upon the arm of an old white-haired man, that uncle to whose care her mother had sent her. While Anne talked to her and heard her tale of how her good uncle had been ordered to Europe for his health, and how that, as her parents still refused to see her, her uncle had resolved not to take her to England but to travel all that summer on the Continent.

While Anne told tremulously of her own happiness, and Robert stood by with a kind pleasant smile, suddenly Amy clutched Anne's arm, and her radiant face grew white as that of a corpse. She pointed out a gaily dressed man in the crowd, upon whose arm leant a haughty French blonde. Anne looked in the direction indicated, and there stood George Aubrey and his wife.

"That, that is the man," whispered Amy, "who told me he was Robert Aubrey."

The successful villain passed on unhurt, for

Amy said nothing to her uncle. Robert's face whitened, but he was silent.

From that day forth he held completely aloof from his brother, to whom he gave a liberal allowance, but to their dying day they never exchanged another word.

CHAPTER XVI.

YANLY MANOR.

TEN years after the event recorded in the last chapter Robert Aubrey and his wife returned for the first time since their marriage to Yanly Manor. It was on an evening in golden August ; the moon had risen, and was sailing softly and in simple majesty across the pure ether. The corn lands spread wide and far on all sides ; the odour of the flowers was wafted upon the breath of the night, and the great blue hills which stand like giant sentinels in that land

of the lakes were half defined in the shimmering moonbeams, half wrapped in the dreamy shadows of cloudland, but when the chimney stacks of the Manor House came into view, Robert Aubrey stopped the carriage, and he and Anne descended, and began to climb the hill together.

“Are you happy, Anne?” whispered Robert.

She gave him her hand in silence, but her heart seemed too full for utterance. He drew the hand within his arm fondly, and presently he spoke again—

“A long exile, a long sojourning in foreign cities, and now once more home and country. That Giver of all good and perfect gifts, who has spared to me my natural senses, and averted from me the curse of our house, will I feel confident continue His blessings to me.”

“And,” said Anne, finding voice and looking up through her happy tears at the tall form of her husband; “that brain, which is after all so vigorous and so well-balanced, will



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